DAILY NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

THE TIMES

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The health myths you should ignore

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Confessions of a private chef
£450 sea bass, steak for the dog

Killers but not rapists to be given early release

PC Harper's widow calls decision a 'betrayal'

Oliver Wright Policy Editor
Daisy Eastlake Political Reporter
Jessica Sharkey Crime Correspondent

Criminals convicted of rape, grooming offences and child sexual assault will no longer be eligible for early release after plans to tackle prison overcrowding were watered down.

Andy Burnham said he was responding to public "anger, anxiety and distress" at the proposals, under which people convicted of some of the most serious offences could have been freed after serving only half of their sentences — down from two thirds at present.

The prime minister admitted he had not been able to "go further" with the restrictions and said people serving time for manslaughter and serious domestic abuse could still be freed to prevent the prison system "reaching capacity and collapsing".

The failure to exclude those convicted of manslaughter means two of the killers of PC Andrew Harper will be eligible for release in January.

Lissie Harper, the widow of the police officer who was killed while responding to a crime in 2019, said she was "bristling with anger. What abhorrent message does this send? How dare ministers say the killing of a police officer is not enough of a 'sickening crime' that deserves the stiffest of punishments?"

She said the release would be "an affront to justice. The government and the justice system have not just let me down ... they have added insult to injury. They are meant to be on our side. This is an utter betrayal — and it's one I will not be able to forgive or forget."

More than 70,000 people have been freed since Labour brought in emergency measures to tackle overcrowding in September 2024. At the end of June, 85,858 people were in custody in England and Wales. The prison estate has an operational capacity of about 89,500.

The Ministry of Justice previously predicted it would run out of prison places in November unless 6,000 prisoners were freed early.

Kemi Badenoch said Burnham wanted a "round of applause for agreeing not to release rapists and child sex offenders. He's not getting one."

The Tory leader added: "Killers, violent offenders, men who have terrorised their partners and more will all still walk out of prison in October thanks to Labour's early release scheme."

Dame Nicole Jacobs, the domestic abuse commissioner, said: "The decision to not exclude domestic abuse perpetrators from this scheme is wrong and puts victims' lives at risk. As I told the lord chancellor just last week, the danger perpetrators pose to their victims should not be underestimated. These are individuals who are fixated on their victim and will stop at nothing to control and cause harm."

Burnham announced a review of the early release programme after entering No 10 two weeks ago.

About 5,000 prisoners were due to become eligible for release from next month, including those convicted of rape, manslaughter and child sexual assault. The Ministry of Justice could not say how many of those 5,000 inmates would no longer be released as a

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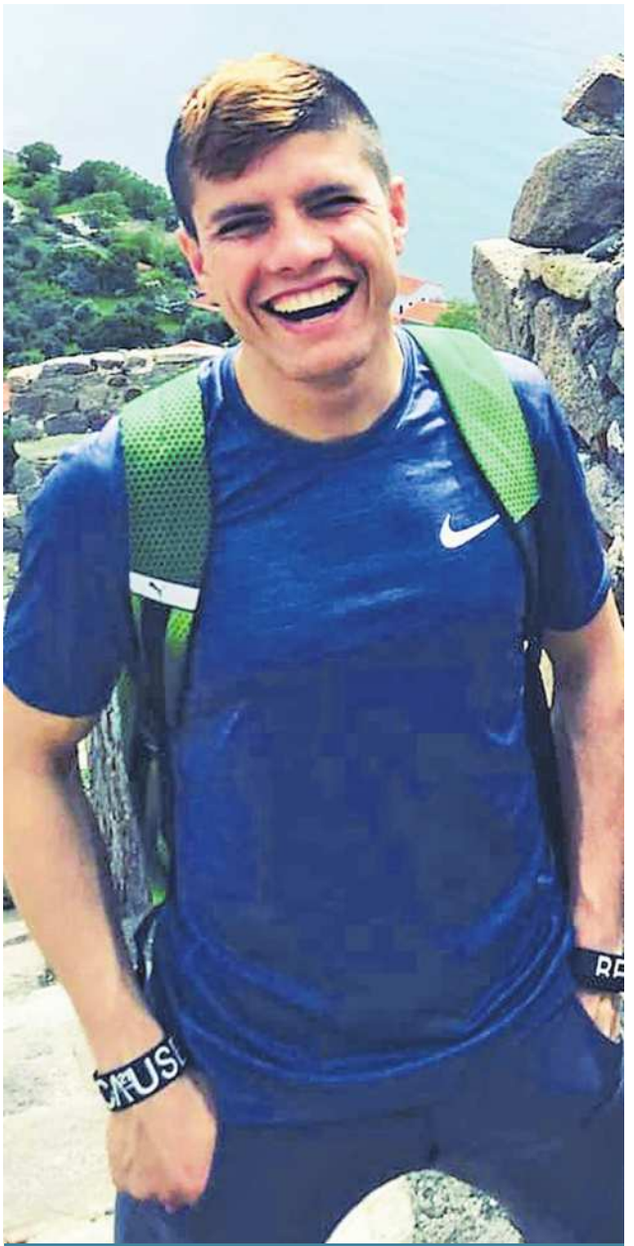

Boxer held over Greek murder

Sharif Ahmadzai, 26, an Afghan boxer, has been arrested on suspicion of murdering Elisabeth-Jane Ross, 38, and disposing of her remains in a suitcase. News, page 9

Diagnosis of autism 'is so wide it risks being useless'

Rhys Blakely Science Editor

Autism has become a "catch-all diagnosis" that is applied to so many people that it risks being almost useless, one of Britain's leading experts on the condition has warned.

Every case of autism now falls under a single clinical label: autism spectrum disorder (ASD). However, Professor Dame Uta Frith said the diagnosis was being applied to people whose lives and needs had little resemblance to one another, from children with profound disabilities who require lifelong care to adults with subtle symptoms who live independently.

Writing in the journal Psychological Medicine, Frith called for the spectrum to be split into clearer groups. This could prevent misdiagnoses while ending the "tragic neglect" of those with the most severe disabilities, she argued.

"Autism wasn't always defined this way — a sort of catch-all diagnosis for a huge variety of conditions," she said. "When it was first identified in the 1940s, it referred to a small group of children with severe difficulties in social interaction, communication and behaviour. Over time, the definition has widened to include people with milder traits and no language or learning problems."

She added: "In the past, my colleagues and I felt confident that we could recognise autism at first impression. But this would not be true today."

Frith is the emeritus professor of cognitive development at University College London. Her work helped to establish influential theories about how autistic people understand the minds of others and how they process detail and context.

The number of people being diagnosed with autism has soared, though figures from different periods are not directly comparable because the criteria have changed dramatically. A British study, published in 1966, identified about four autistic children in every 10,000. Recent research has put the proportion of schoolchildren with a recorded diagnosis at about one in 57 — a 44-fold increase.

A separate study of UK primary-care

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IN THE NEWS

Rod Liddle dies at 66
Tributes have been paid to Rod Liddle, who wrote regular columns for The Sunday Times and The Sun and presented a weekly show for Times Radio, after his death aged 66. Page 5

'Plagiarism' furore
The president of a Cambridge college has withdrawn her support for the Cambridge professor Jason Arday after he appeared to admit plagiarising parts of his PhD thesis. Page 8

Driest July on record
England and Wales had their driest July since records began in 1836, damaging crops and causing wildfires. About 23 million people are subject to a hosepipe ban. Page 13

Nuclear ban relaxed
Eighty-one years after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan is now openly debating whether the country needs to include nuclear weapons in its defence plans. Page 24

Big pharma's tie-up
Almost £18 billion was wiped off the value of AstraZeneca as investors delivered a frosty response to reports it was exploring a deal to combine with a US rival. Page 29

Raducanu ruled out
Emma Raducanu will miss the US Open because of a stress fracture in her lower right leg. The British No 1 had pulled out of Wimbledon at the 11th hour due to the injury. Page 56

News

Today's highlights

7am **Alex Norris**, the justice secretary

10.45am The entomologist **Dino Martins**, below, on his mission to change how we think about parasites

12.45pm **AN Wilson**, the historian, looks back at the history of political pacts

1.15pm **Paul Bristow**, the mayor of Cambridgeshire and Peterborough

3.35pm The security expert **Frank Gardner** discusses his latest novel, *Ballistic*

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TODAY'S EDITION

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Dog's ashes are launched 119,000ft into heavens above
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Can Roberto Mancini win back hearts in Italy?
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Ariana Grande is stepping back from public life
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Were 60,000 migrants intentionally let into Spanish territory?

The Story

The largest single illegal border crossing in the history of the EU took place last week in Ceuta. But why did the migrants all come at once? Was a Spanish legal change to blame, or foreign actors annoyed at Spain's lenient migration policy?

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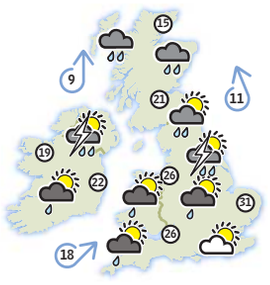

Showery rain in Scotland. Sunshine and scattered heavy showers elsewhere. **Full forecast, page 47**

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App will track rail passengers' location to stop fare evasion

Laurence Sleator
Transport Correspondent

A digital ticketing app that uses GPS to track a rail passenger's location is to be expanded by the government as part of a drive against fare evasion.

Before the full nationalisation of the railways the government is testing digital pay-as-you-go ticket technology for some routes in the East Midlands and Yorkshire.

The app monitors a passenger's location and checks them in at the start and end of a journey, even if there are no barriers at a station. The cost of the journey is calculated and charged to the passenger's bank card.

Fees are capped and designers say that the app makes it easier for passengers to find the cheapest tickets. Routes covered include Leicester to Nottingham via Derby, Harrogate to Leeds, and Sheffield to Doncaster.

It is hoped that being able to see where a passenger got on and off a train will help stop evasion techniques such as "short faring", where customers buy a digital ticket for only the last part of their journey, and "doughnutting", when tickets for the start and end portions of a journey are bought but not for the section in between.

The trials were open only to a select number of passengers but now an unlimited number can sign up. Paper and normal digital tickets will still be available while the trial results are assessed before any decision on introducing the technology nationwide.

"Fare evasion is illegal and selfish," said Heidi Alexander, the transport secretary. "We are committed to tackling ticket cheats, and that's one of the expected benefits of expanding our digital ticketing app to more people across the trial areas.

"The GPS technology both prevents people dishonestly buying the wrong ticket, and makes sure people aren't accidentally overpaying for their journey either.

"This ticketing development is just one example of how we're modernising our railways and putting passengers first as we set up Great British Railways, making journeys easier and more convenient."

The app also has safeguards. These include staff conducting post-journey "manual inspection reviews" to flag anything suspicious and monitoring a user's phone battery life so it can confirm any genuine mistakes. Should a user consistently disconnect or turn their phone off during travel they will be emailed to remind them of their obligations, be charged a maximum fare or be blocked from the app.

If an inspector wants to check tickets on the train or a passenger finds themselves stuck at a ticket barrier, the app produces a QR code showing where the journey started.

Jen Fulford, in charge of future ticketing programmes at Trainline, which is helping to run the trial, said: "Digital pay as you go is a fantastic technology that has been warmly welcomed by over 1,500 triallists in the East Midlands and helps the railway achieve some of its key goals."

Fare evasion is estimated to cost the industry £400 million a year. The government is making a series of announcements designed to tackle it.

This has included £33 million to install shoulder-high ticket barriers at fare-dodging hotspots to prevent the barriers being jumped and a "railcard verification step" online, at ticket machines and at the ticket office before any discount can be obtained.

Apple set for court battle over police accessing data

Mark Sellman Technology Correspondent

Apple and the government are on course for a legal battle over an attempt by the police and security services to access data of British citizens held by the tech company.

The Home Office is seeking to force Apple to allow access to the data even when it is encrypted but Apple has now taken legal action to block this.

The row threatens to reignite a transatlantic row over the issue that flared when ministers tried a similar step last year. In that case the government wanted to access data being held by Apple relating to everyone, not just British citizens, which led to a backlash from the Trump administration. The UK appeared to back down but has now modified its request to focus on British data.

The legal fight is being conducted at the Investigatory Powers Tribunal, which handles the Investigatory Powers Act, dubbed the "snoopers charter".

The act enables law enforcement to investigate terrorism, national security and serious crime. The tech industry and campaigners have opposed any attempts by the government to undermine encryption, which they view as fundamental to privacy and security. At the heart of the debate is end-to-end encryption, which means that data can be decrypted only by the intended users or their trusted devices.

Apple has moved more of its stored data to this method and the government wants it to create a system where it can be accessed, which campaigners call a "backdoor".

The Financial Times first reported Apple's legal challenge, a move confirmed by Privacy International, which is challenging the government's request. Apple said it had filed the lawsuit rather than Privacy International and referred to a previous statement in which it said: "We have never built a backdoor or master key to any of our products or services and we never will."

Ron Wyden, a US senator who sits on the Senate intelligence committee, told The Times: "Every Englishman with an iCloud account will be less safe from criminals and predators if Apple is forced to weaken its security."

A government spokesperson said: "The UK supports strong encryption and robust privacy protections, but it is also vital that law enforcement can access communications when necessary ... to protect the public."

Robotaxis 'will drive up traffic jams'

Laurence Sleator, Jennifer Zhou

Self-driving taxis have been heralded by ministers as the "future of transport", with the promise of reducing collisions and providing billions of pounds in economic growth as the industry grows.

However, their introduction to London may produce some unintended consequences, including greater congestion and pollution, a report has said.

CoMoUK, a charity focusing on promoting shared transport, has published a white paper that highlights studies from the United States, where driverless taxis have been used for years. They show the vehicles can be empty for up to two thirds of the time spent on the road.

In the first month of Waymo's commercial service in California, taxis were empty for 64 per cent of the time, although this figure slowly came down as the fleet size increased and people became more aware of the service.

The report said that, although most driverless cars are electric, the greater congestion they cause could increase pollution as other non-electric vehicles are forced to stand idle, emitting more exhaust emissions.

Infantino 'calling Trump' to salvage job

George Grylls Washington

Gianni Infantino has repeatedly tried to call President Trump as he battles to save his job as head of Fifa, according to sources.

The Swiss-Italian football administrator has been appealing to the president for help since Friday, when he was forced to abandon plans to sell a 20 per cent stake in the World Cup to private investors, according to the New York Post. Fifa and the White House have yet to comment on the claims.

Infantino has described the president as a "really close friend" and awarded him the inaugural Fifa Peace Prize last year. He opened Fifa's US office in Trump Tower before the tournament.

Amid mounting calls for his resignation it was reported that Infantino was hoping to meet Marco Rubio, the secretary of state, for talks yesterday. However, Fifa and the State Department denied that a meeting was taking place.

"He wanted to get online with the secretary and talk about how soccer can be a form of soft power for America," one insider told the New York Post. "But we all know that it is about job protection. It is not about anything else at this point."

"He is looking for allies of note to publicly support him," another said.

The Trump administration has kept its distance from the crisis engulfing Fifa and last week the president denied that he had discussed Infantino's plan, first revealed by The Times, to sell a stake in the World Cup to investors including a venture capital fund run by Joshua Kushner, the brother of Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner.

Andy Burnham has called for Infantino to step down and the Football Association has withdrawn its support for the Fifa president's re-election bid.

Plans to oust Infantino, page 56

La Plante: I'm damned by driving ban

Prime Suspect writer claims disqualification for speeding offences will end her career, writes **Lowri Lewis**

KEN MCKAY/ITV/SHUTTERSTOCK

Lynda La Plante said the death of her wolfhound Hugo, top, had badly affected her. She needed to drive to walk her new dog, Theo, above, and to talk to criminals for research

Lynda La Plante, the bestselling crime author, has been disqualified from driving after she tearfully told a court that such a ban would end her career.

The writer, 83, who is also behind the TV show *Prime Suspect*, said she would be unable to drive her beloved guard dog, Theo, for a daily walk, leading her to stopping writing altogether.

She told the court that she believed she would have to have her dog rehomed if she was unable to drive him to his walks, saying: "I think the emotional turmoil of that would truly damn my career as a writer.

"It's very, very solitary, and I work exceptionally hard, and I would just stop."

La Plante also said that she needed her car to meet criminals and sources for research to write her next works of fiction.

She told Lavender Hill magistrates' court in London that she did not want to pay for a driver because she would not want them "asking questions" while she travelled back from meeting her sources.

The writer said that she would close her company if a ban was put in place, putting four employees out of work.

However, magistrates concluded that she had not proved a ban would cause her "exceptional hardship" — and handed her a six-month disqualification.

La Plante, who created the hit robbery TV series *Widows* in the 1980s and brought *Prime Suspect,* which starred Helen Mirren, to the screen in 1991, pleaded guilty yesterday to breaking the 20mph speed limit five times near her home in Kingston-upon-Thames between November 2025 and April this year.

The writer admitted driving at 24mph twice, 25mph, 26mph and 27mph when she was taking her 18-month-old dog for his daily walk.

Kari Williamson, prosecuting, said that La Plante already had nine points on her licence for three speeding offences committed between 2023 and 2025.

Her lawyer, Nick Freeman, who is known as "Mr Loophole" and has represented a string of celebrity clients, urged magistrates to spare her a ban.

Asked why she could not just pay for a driver as she had in the past for "showbusiness functions", La Plante said that she needed "solitary time" after meeting her sources. Giving evidence, she said: "I don't want to sit in the back with a driver asking questions."

La Plante said that she had four books in the works and argued that she needed to drive to conduct research interviews as "forms of criminality" like to be "very choosy of the location".

Giving evidence, La Plante said she got her new dog, Theo, after suffering the devastation of the untimely death of her previous pet, Hugo, who had been "in the prime of his life".

"I don't want it to sound trivial — this woman and her dog — but I can't tell you what it was like with this enormous, beautiful wolfhound. I don't know how he did it.

"He would come up into my office, it was as if he said 'stop'. He knew I had been working for five solid hours, and this paw would come up — bang."

Fighting back tears, she said she "lost it" when Hugo died and she "didn't know what to do with my life".

She said her new dog had helped her through the grieving process. "I love him, it's as simple as that, but at the same time he has become a great comfort to me," she said.

La Plante said she drove Theo to be trained on the walk from Roehampton to Wimbledon.

She said Richmond Park, which is nearby, was unsuitable because it was "alive with joggers", as well as deer, and she was trying to train Theo not to chase people.

The magistrates imposed fines totalling £3,330 on the author and handed her a six-month ban. Her points total rose to 24, and she was ordered to pay £130 costs and a £1,332 victim surcharge.

THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR
Lynda La Plante
SACRIFICE
THE NEW JACK WARR THRILLER
To stay alive, a detective must lose everything...

Before her court hearing, La Plante had complained about "very confusing" road signs on the A308 in Kingston-upon-Thames. Freeman suggested she had inadvertently broken the speed limit while concentrating on driving safely.

The 3rd Viscount Hanworth, David Stephen Geoffrey Pollock, is due to argue special reasons to try to avoid a driving ban after he was caught speeding at 27mph in a 20mph zone, also in London.

The former Labour hereditary peer, 80, pleaded guilty to speeding in Islington in February at Westminster magistrates' court, which could result in three points being put on his licence as well as a fine.

He already has nine points on his licence, so he may be disqualified if his special reasons application is thrown out at a hearing in October.

Barbie stars' blockbuster pay demands put sequel in jeopardy

Alex Farber Media Correspondent

At the height of the blockbuster battle between *Barbie* and *Oppenheimer* one thing was certain — only one was likely to have a sequel.

But now the prospect of a *Barbie 2* returning to extend its box office lead over Christopher Nolan's biopic is in jeopardy.

Producers have been struggling to strike deals with the Hollywood actors Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling to reprise their roles as Barbie and Ken.

According to The New York Times, Gosling, 45, is asking to be paid $20 million for a sequel. Warner Bros Discovery, the studio behind the blockbuster that took $1.4 billion at cinemas in 2023, has made six offers in three years to convince the stars to return.

It rejected reports that David Zaslav, its chief executive, had "baulked at terms agreed to" with the stars. "There was never an agreed upon framework that was approved and pulled back," a spokesperson added. "Reps declined the most recent offer, which is among the biggest Warner Bros has made for a film. No counter has been made to date."

Negotiations for sequels do not often prove problematic in Hollywood because studios and stars tend to agree terms before the first film in any potential franchise.

But Robbie, 36, and Gosling were not asked to agree long-term contracts after Warner Bros signed a single-film deal with the *Barbie* director Greta Gerwig.

Gerwig is said to have worked up an idea for a second *Barbie* film with her writing partner Noah Baumbach but is refusing to show studio bosses until they have clinched a deal with the co-stars.

Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling in the 2023 hit

And the clock is ticking — Warner Bros Discovery's deal with the Barbie rights holder Mattel is due to expire in December. If terms cannot be agreed before the deadline, the rights will revert to the toy brand which could redevelop the franchise with a different concept.

The stalemate was confirmed by Pam Abdy and Michael De Luca, the Warner Bros Pictures Group co-chairs and chief executives.

"We have a rights deal with Mattel in place and have made a series of big offers to try and finalise deals to make the next *Barbie* film," they said in a joint statement. "Unfortunately, we have been unable to reach an agreement thus far."

In 2024 Robbie appeared to be lukewarm about the prospect of a *Barbie* sequel. "It's funny, that knee-jerk reaction in this day and age for everyone to immediately ask about a sequel," she told Variety. "I don't think it was like that 20 years ago. We want to make more films that have the effect that *Barbie* has."

News

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER JAMES GLOSSOP

We've got it licked Children sample the goodies on offer during the North Yorkshire Ice Cream Championships at Ripon racecourse's Scoops and Saddles family day

Early social media use among children linked to lower grades

Rhys Blakely Science Editor

Opening a social media account at the start of secondary school was linked to children being about six months behind in maths by the age of 16, a study of more than 5,000 pupils has found.

The findings suggest that frequent phone-checking disrupts homework and concentration, leading to poorer exam scores. They were published as the government prepares to ban under-16s from using services such as Instagram and TikTok amid growing concerns over the impact on mental health, sleep and academic attainment.

According to the media regulator Ofcom, 83 per cent of British 11-year-olds own a smartphone. The move to secondary school marked a tipping point at which many children receive their first device.

The new study compared a group of "early adopter" pupils from schools in northern Italy, who had opened their first personal social media account at the age of 11 or 12, with a second group who waited until they were 14 or 15.

Each early adopter was matched with a kind of "statistical twin" in the comparison group — a pupil with a similar family background, similarly educated parents and comparable test results earlier in childhood. When the pupils sat national tests at the age of 15 or 16, those who had joined social media earlier scored significantly lower in maths and Italian. The gap was roughly equivalent to that expected from a child missing six months of schooling.

Marco Gui, a professor at the University of Milano-Bicocca, who led the study, said: "While most research on social media and minors has looked at mental health as an outcome, we looked at academic performance and we found clearer signs of this negative effect."

He backed tougher age restrictions, saying: "It's an emergency moment where bans are a correct choice, in my personal opinion."

The study, which was published in the journal Nature Human Behaviour, cannot prove that social media caused the poorer results. However, the researchers said habitual phone-checking appeared to be one of the most plausible explanations. Early adopters were more likely to report checking their phones during homework, at school, before bed and after waking, potentially disrupting concentration and sleep.

Dennis Ougrin, a professor at Queen Mary University of London, who was not involved in the research, said: "The study adds to growing evidence that the age at which young people first engage with social media may matter for their educational development. While the findings do not prove that social media alone causes poorer academic performance, they suggest that earlier, largely unsupervised use is associated with differences in later attainment, particularly in mathematics and language. The study also points towards plausible mechanisms, such as frequent phone checking and reduced attention, rather than simply screen time itself."

In June, the government announced that social media companies would be banned from offering their services to children under 16. The planned restrictions are expected to include TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook, X and YouTube, while messaging services such as WhatsApp and Signal are not intended to be covered. The first regulations are due to be put before parliament by the end of this year and the ban is expected to take effect in the spring.

Ministers announced further protections for 16 and 17-year-olds in July. Social media apps will be required to apply a default overnight curfew from midnight until 6am and automatically disable features designed to keep teenagers scrolling. The measures include restrictions on auto-playing content.

'Catch-all' diagnosis for autism may become worthless

Continued from page 1

records found a nearly ninefold increase in the rate of newly recorded cases between 1998 and 2018. This does not mean autism itself increased at the same rate. Greater awareness of the condition, less stigma and better recognition of autism in women and adults are likely to explain much of the rise.

According to Frith, efforts to recognise people who were once overlooked may also be pulling too many different problems under a single diagnosis. "Has the desire for inclusiveness eventually led to overinclusion?" she asked.

Frith has recently highlighted evidence of marked differences between people diagnosed in childhood and those identified in adolescence or adulthood.

Those diagnosed as children are more likely to have obvious developmental, language or learning difficulties. Those diagnosed later are more likely to have average or high intelligence and conditions such as anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.

Some research has also found differences in the genetic patterns linked to the two groups.

Frith argues that they may be so distinct that "we can no longer see a common denominator".

There is no blood test, scan or other biological marker that can confirm autism. Diagnosis depends on a patient's history, their words and the observations and judgments of clinical staff.

Frith added that she was concerned about "masking", which refers to the idea that some people conceal their autistic traits to fit in.

"If masking can be used to explain the total absence of symptoms," she wrote, "then, in theory, this could lower the diagnostic threshold to zero."

Quintagram® No 2637

Solve all five concise clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Forceful punch (4)

_ _ _ _

2 Vehicle immobiliser (5)

_ _ _ _ _

3 Brief period of intense activity (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

4 More slender (7)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _

5 Polite greeting or remark (10)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

A	A	A	B	C	E	E	F
I	L	L	L	L	L	M	M
M	N	O	P	P	R	R	R
R	S	S	T	U	W	Y	Y

Solutions see T2 MindGames p14
Cryptic clues T2 MindGames p15

Tate fall boy discharged

A boy who was thrown off the tenth floor of Tate Modern seven years ago has been discharged from hospital, his family said. The French child was six when Jonty Bravery attacked him in August 2019. The child had brain surgery in January and was discharged last month. Bravery admitted attempted murder and was jailed in 2020 for at least 15 years.

Shoplift tech success

The number of shoplifters being brought to justice in London has quadrupled thanks to an online platform that lets retailers send camera footage of crimes to police in minutes, figures suggest. Cases from the platform saw a positive outcome, such as a charge or caution, 29.4 per cent of the time, compared with 7.3 per cent before its introduction.

'Out of control' driver

A man who lied to police that his electric Jaguar I-Pace was out of control and accelerating on its own has been jailed for four years and three months. Nathan Owen, 33, admitted fraud and dangerous driving at Liverpool crown court after driving at 86mph and colliding with a police car 31 times in an attempt to avoid paying his car finance.

Music professor cleared

A violin professor at the Royal College of Music has been cleared of assaulting an 18-year-old student, telling Southwark crown court that he had been correcting her posture during a lesson. Jan Repko, 68, was acquitted of sexual assault and assault by penetration after a retrial at Southwark crown court. He had called the allegations "absurd".

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‘Brilliant, provocative, inimitable’

Rod Liddle, who has died aged 66, combined a serious intellect with razor-sharp wit, writes **Alex Farber**

The journalist and broadcaster Rod Liddle, who wrote columns for The Sunday Times and The Sun and presented a weekly show for Times Radio, died suddenly on Sunday evening at James Cook University Hospital in Middlesbrough after a short illness.

His children, Wilder, Tyler and Emmy, said in a statement: “We’re all very saddened and shocked at the sudden passing of our wonderful father. He raised us much as you might imagine, to be inquisitive, brave and always humorous.

“Even in hospital in the last few weeks, he consistently held the room and never let the awful situation show. He has left a legacy that we are all incredibly proud of, he will always be our guide on how to live an extraordinary life.”

Robert Thomson, chief executive of News Corp and editor of The Times from 2002 to 2007, said: “Rod was puckishly profound and profoundly puckish. We were determined back in 2003 that he should bring his intellectual energy and lateral wit to The Times, and his wisdom and whimsy have echoed around our company and the world ever since. Rod’s resonance will surely echo for many, many years to come.”

Rebekah Brooks, chief executive of News UK, said he would be greatly missed by readers, listeners and viewers. “Rod was an inimitable journalistic force — brilliant, provocative and immensely talented — whose sharp wit and uncompromising voice graced our pages and airwaves for decades,” Brooks said. “Whether writing for The Sunday Times and The Sun or broadcasting on Times Radio, he challenged conventional thinking and left an indelible mark on British journalism.”

Liddle, a former editor of BBC Radio 4’s *Today* programme, started writing for The Times in 2003 after being poached from The Guardian by Michael Gove, who was the Times’s Saturday editor.

Gove, now editor of The Spectator, said: “He had a unique voice and I’m glad it came into its own on our pages.”

He went on to write weekly pieces for The Sunday Times and The Sun and began presenting a Saturday morning on Times Radio show last year.

Ben Taylor, editor of The Sunday Times, said that he would be desperately missed. “Rod Liddle had a wonderful way with words and used his unique talent to speak for the readers, highlighting the cant and absurdity that bedevils modern life,” Taylor said. “He was also supremely entertaining and for years his column was the first that many turned to every Sunday.”

Victoria Newton, editor-in-chief of The Sun, described Liddle as a brilliant, fearless columnist. “A champion of press freedom, no topic was off-limits, and his writing — as funny as it was excoriating — was simply exceptional,” Newton said. “A terrific observer of the frailties of our political class, he will be remembered for his razor-sharp wit and for his huge intellect.”

Camilla Long, the Sunday Times columnist, said Liddle was a brilliant writer with a fine intellect and she would miss him. “He knew what he thought on everything,” she added. “He could be funny, but he was also a very serious writer. He cared deeply about us, this country and everything that went on in it. He had another quality most columnists would kill for — he wasn’t afraid to say it.”

Samir Shah, the BBC chair, described Liddle as a “one-off” and a “bit of a professional curmudgeon”.

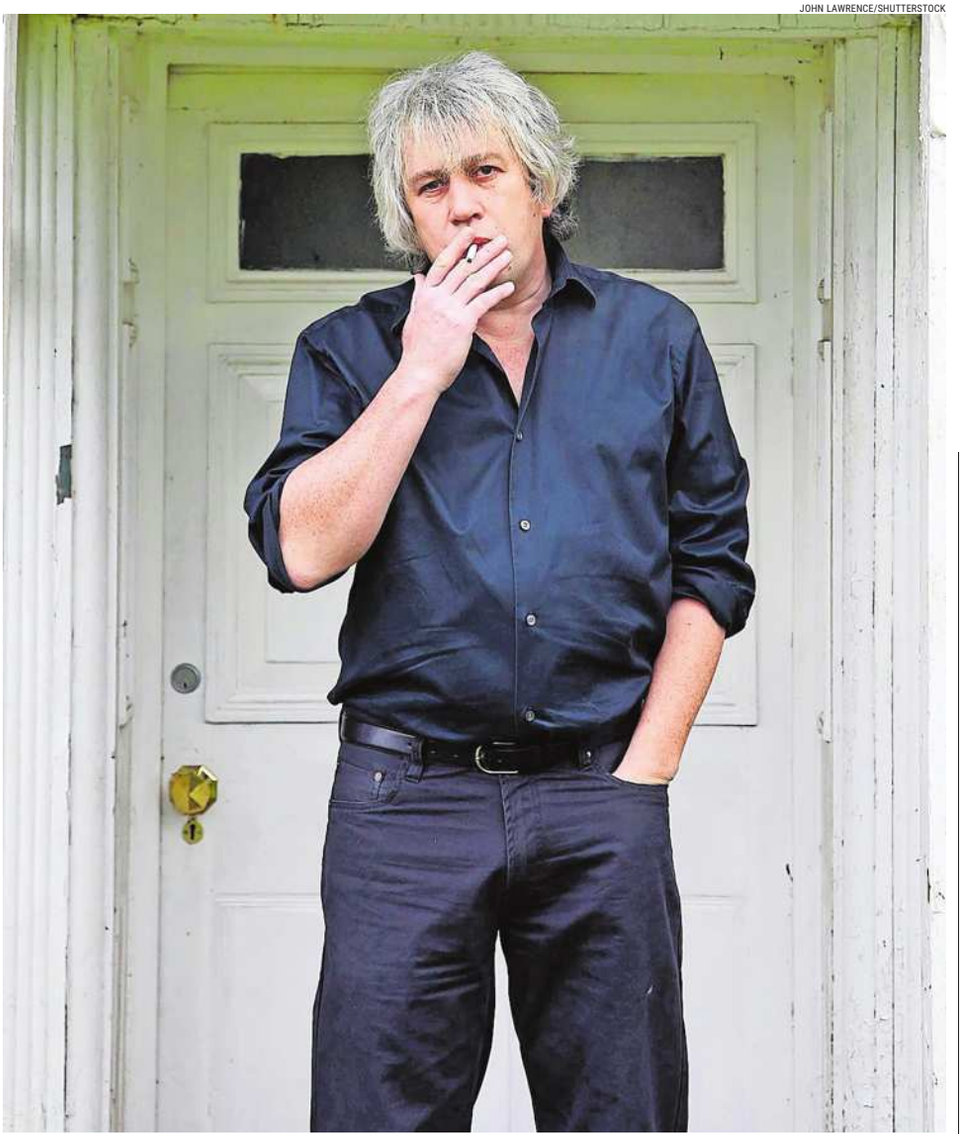
“Rod was a man of many talents — including being a first-class chef. Going to dinner at his place was not that far removed from going to a Michelin-starred restaurant. Who’d have thunk it? But most of all he was a warm-hearted and generous fellow.”

After leaving the BBC Liddle started writing for The Spectator. His final piece, in June, headlined “Kemi gives me hope”, typified his acerbic sense of humour. “I had a notion the other day that there was possibly more I could offer to this fleeting world. A feeling that with life having been comparatively kind to me, perhaps there is something I could put back,” he wrote. “I have these thoughts about once every month — and usually they are idly dismissed because they are either unrealistic or homicidal.”

Kemi Badenoch said she had missed Liddle’s Spectator column and voice on the radio in recent weeks and was shocked by his death. “I don’t have the words to express how sad this is for journalism, for his readers and most of all his friends and family,” she said.

Obituary, page 43

JOHN LAWRENCE/SHUTTERSTOCK



Rod Liddle wrote columns for The Sunday Times, The Sun and The Spectator. Top, with his second wife, Alicia Monckton

Playful genius who poured petrol where others feared to tread

Fraser Nelson
Comment

No one could write an opening sentence as well as Rod Liddle. When I was his editor, I called it the “cocaine intro”: one sentence and you were hooked. It might make you laugh, gawp or wonder whether this time he really was about to go too far. Usually all three. But his trail always led to a subtle, serious and original argument — one nobody else had thought, or would think, to make or dare to do so. The result was the greatest satirical writing of our times.

I always thought it odd that such a wildly gifted writer ended up writing almost by accident. He joined the BBC and rose to become editor of Radio 4’s *Today* programme. His occasional columns were a side hustle. But they were sensational, causing a succession of controlled explosions. He quite enjoyed this. The BBC did not and presented him with a choice: broadcasting or print. The rest was history.

Because he regarded himself as being of the left he didn’t mind holding what he saw as his own side up to ridicule. They didn’t always see the joke. But he defied party-political pigeonholing, taking aim at everyone. His bias was towards the most dangerous issues, to pour petrol where others feared to tread. He did so not with polemic or invective, but humour. Puncturing egos, mocking pomposity, slaughtering sacred cows.

In a censorious age he was reliably, joyfully transgressive. When I became editor of The Spectator in 2009 and canvassed as much readers’ opinion as I could, I heard one request more than all others combined: *don’t tone down Rod*. For many readers, the magazine started and ended with what he had to say.

I also saw how naturally, how perfectly he would write. If we discussed his column theme at 2pm, the copy arrived 90 minutes later. He’d write about the media, sport, politics, demographics and even took on a music column, showcasing his knowledge about composition. Not that he’d ever describe it as such.

In person, he was full of joie de vivre — never grumpy, grand, angry or touchy. He loved meeting readers. The first time I saw him at a readers’ carol concert, with Sancerre in a pint glass, he was comparing notes (and jokes) with them: they were his people. He loved them as they did him. He seldom turned out for events with the great and the good, but he never missed a chance to meet the subscribers who, as he saw it, he worked for.

When cancel culture came along Rod Liddle was the first, defiant target. There was a game: get them on a technicality. If they quote a statistic that’s just a bit off, then you demand a correction. If one is given: behold! The writer has “been forced to correct his article”. Ipso, the press regulator, can be prevailed upon to rule it inaccurate. Demands can be made to sack or discipline the writer.

Rod had his fair share. I saw it as my job to fight them off: not always successfully. After I ended up in court for one of his (very good and entirely accurate) articles, I set up a team to defend writers in the new cancel culture era. Once, for example, Rod wrote about a place in Yorkshire, Savile Town, that was “98 per cent Muslim”. Obviously a figure of speech: a classic trap. So the team would work out what the actual number was. The answer: 98 per cent. He was exactly right — as he was almost all of the time. His flair, his jokes, his playfulness were built on top of a rigour that he’d hate to be known for. This combination is what gave his writing its power.

There are many writers who aim to be shocking, many who are funny; a very small number who can be both. But what made Rod stand out was the fusion of those qualities with judgment, discipline and an ability to cut to the heart of the matter. There was, and never will be, anyone quite like him.

Farage's plan for navy to return

Oliver Wright Policy Editor

France has warned that Reform UK's plan for the Royal Navy to turn back small boats would be illegal after Nigel Farage set out proposals for the "largest military operation in the English Channel since World War Two".

Farage used a press conference yesterday to pledge to send the navy into the Channel to intercept all migrant boats should the party win power at the next election. Under so-called Operation Fortress, migrants would be detained, given food and water before being returned "under escort" on naval vessels to France or Belgium.

France's interior ministry said: "This would be a violation of French sovereignty as well as a violation of maritime law and international law. Separately, as part of the measures put in place with the UK and the arrangements deployed at the local level, the interior ministry states that the number of crossings is down in 2026."

Reform UK said in response: "We will always stand up for British interests and protect our people, whether Emmanuel Macron [the French president] likes it or not. Humanitarian missions do not violate maritime or international law."

Farage also told the press conference that he was "open-minded" about talks with Rupert Lowe about a pact to reunite the "patriotic right" of British politics, but dismissed one of his key demands. Farage said he had suggested a call to Lowe, who at the weekend urged the two to work together.

Lowe, a former Reform MP, acrimoniously left the party in March last year amid claims of bullying and threatening behaviour. The multimillionaire went on to found his own party called Restore that has eaten into Reform's vote share.

Last week in the Greater Manchester mayoral election, Restore came fourth with 9 per cent of first-preference votes, ahead of both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats.

Lowe had posted on X that he was open to a deal with Reform if Farage would agree to a number of demands. This included making it Reform's policy to ban the burqa and halal meat and rule out any former Conservative ministers in future cabinets.

Farage said that he had "no desire" to meet some of the items on Lowe's policy "shopping list" and suggested that he was not serious about a deal.

"If you want to do a political deal with somebody, you know, you would contact them privately and not do a 12-minute video," he said. "That said, I did actually reach out ... yesterday to him. I did say, 'Look, should we have a call?' I haven't heard back yet, so I don't know what the sincerity of this is."

He added: "I don't ditch my friends. I don't ditch my allies, whether that's Suella Braverman or Posh George [Cottrell]. You know I do not ditch people because somebody else wants me to."

Lowe was one of the first Reform MPs elected to Westminster in the 2024 general election when he won in his Great Yarmouth seat. The former chair of Southampton FC had previously served alongside Farage in the Brexit Party in the European parliament.

However, less than a year after being elected to Westminster, he was reported to police by Reform UK's then chairman, Zia Yusuf, over accusations of bullying and threatening behaviour. He was also investigated by the party over bullying claims.

Speaking on Sunday, he said that there could be a reconciliation. "I truly believe there could be sufficient common ground for our two movements to co-operate collectively [to] destroy the looming left-wing alliance that will finish off what hope remains for this country," he said.

Farage admitted that Restore could damage Reform by eating into its core vote. "You could see a situation where Restore, without the hope of winning anything outside Great Yarmouth — I mean literally without hope of winning a single seat in the country — could do us great harm," he said. "I think online you will see a lot of Restore potential voters now beginning to worry about the impact that might have.

"I finalise that by saying if it was the offer of a deal, it came in a very unusual way. I have responded to it potentially, you know, with an open mind, as I would, but I'm certainly not going to be ditching people who I view to be allies and a great asset."

Lowe later posted on X that Farage was a "liar" and disputed his version of events, but said the offer was still open to him and Reform UK.

Separately, Farage admitted discussing the "liabilities" of returning to politics before the 2024 election but insisted he had "no intention" of doing so at the time. The Sunday Times reported that Farage had negotiated a deal with Richard Tice, who was then party chief, in March and April 2024, to return as leader. Under that deal, once Farage became leader, Reform would repay or write off more than £1 million in outstanding loans it had received from Tice's company.

Farage admitted he had spoken to Tice in spring 2024 about what would happen if he returned to lead the party.

He said: "You'd be a bit of a mug, wouldn't you, to walk into a job and not find out what the potential liabilities were, and they were substantial." He said it "wasn't a deal, it wasn't an agreement, it was subject to if I came back".

The parliamentary sleaze watchdog has also started an investigation into whether Tice failed to declare an interest. Tice said in a post on X that the investigation by Daniel Greenberg, the parliamentary commissioner for standards, was over an alleged failure to declare an interest in Israel when speaking in a debate at Westminster Hall. Despite the commissioner confirming the investigation on his website, Tice said it was "garbage in [the] media".

Reform must learn to display political maturity, leading article, page 23

Behind the story

Last August Nigel Farage stood at a podium and promised mass deportations would sort the small boats crisis. This August he did it again, unveiling Operation Fortress — a pledge to deploy the navy to intercept every crossing and return migrants to France or Belgium in what Reform UK called the largest military operation in the Channel since the Second World War (Oliver Wright writes).

The obvious question was why another grand plan, just 12 months after the last?

One explanation is political momentum. For much of the past 18 months the party has enjoyed a seemingly unstoppable rise. But in recent weeks that has slowed as standards investigations and questions over donations mounted, with Farage's personal ratings also dropping.

Meanwhile Rupert Lowe's Restore has performed well in the Makerfield and Greater Manchester mayoral by-elections, splitting the vote on the right in both cases. Lowe, a former Reform MP who founded the rival party after his acrimonious split with Farage, at the weekend publicly offered co-operation with Reform — if it embraced a string of Restore policies.

Farage said he was "open-minded" and admitted Restore could do his party "great harm".

Then there were the images of the tens of thousands of migrants crossing from Morocco into Spain's North African territory of Ceuta last week. In Britain, Channel crossings reached their highest daily total of the year on July 29, even though the cumulative number of arrivals remained 42 per cent lower than at the same point in 2025. It was against this backdrop Reform chose to strike.

At a moment when Reform needed to steady itself politically, Farage reached once again for the issue he has trusted throughout his career to reset the debate on his own terms.

Nigel Farage, the leader of Reform UK, spoke in London about the small boats crisis joined by his deputy Richard Tice, top

Jail early-release scheme will exclude rapists but not killers

Continued from page 1

result of Burnham's changes, but insisted it would be able to cope with the extra pressure on the prison estate.

Ministers are also delaying the extension of early release to more serious criminals by a month, from September until October, so probation staff have time to plan for releases and victims can have a say in the restrictions placed on offenders.

Burnham said: "I want to be honest — I wanted to go even further as I know there will still be concerns about other offenders having their sentence shortened. But it's not possible without the prison system reaching capacity and collapsing, which would put public safety at much greater risk."

The early release scheme was announced in 2024 after warnings from officials that the prison service was on the verge of being overwhelmed. Since then nearly 70,000 criminals convicted of less serious offences have been released early.

But this summer David Lammy, the justice secretary, announced that the scheme would be extended to include more serious offences. He said that, without the extension, "we would get back to a situation where we were running, at 99, nearly 100 per cent" in prison capacity.

Amy Clowrey, a solicitor representing child sexual abuse victims, said seven of her clients received letters in June informing them their perpetrators could be eligible for early release, causing "significant distress". Clowrey said she was "incredibly pleased that the government has listened to the voices of survivors who have been campaigning for this", but added that all sex offenders and violent perpetrators should be excluded from the scheme.

migrants is illegal, says France

ANADOLU/GETTY IMAGES; TAYFUN SALCI; JOE GIDDENS/PA

right. In Clacton, Essex, the by-election candidate Andy Erlam, in white, held a street hustings with members of the public

Trump: Bankrupt UK should drill North Sea

George Grylls Washington

President Trump has said that Britain is a "bankrupt country" as he once again encouraged Andy Burnham to open up the North Sea to more drilling.

The president said "loser" countries relied on wind power and the UK was "sitting on top of gold". He repeated his previous claim that Burnham could issue new drilling licences, having previously heralded their "very good" phone call last month.

"I think your new prime minister is actually gonna open up. I spoke to him. He sounded terrific on this subject," Trump said at an Oval Office press conference yesterday.

"If you open up, you'd be a wealthy country. You keep it closed, you're going to be a bankrupt country. Which is what you are now. Essentially, you are a bankrupt country. You're sitting on top of gold. Better than gold. And you don't do anything with it."

He claimed that oil and gas reserves in the North Sea would last for "probably a 1,000 years", although industry projections suggest they will last until roughly 2050.

Energy prices are much higher in the UK compared with the US, with British consumers paying about 30p per kWh compared with 13p in the US.

Last week Trump claimed that "the new gentleman", referring to Burnham, would "open up the North Sea".

Burnham has said he will take a "pragmatic" approach to extracting oil and gas. He plans to honour existing licences, sticking with Labour's 2024 manifesto pledge. He is considering extra production at existing sites, and potentially at the Rosebank and Jackdaw areas, which are under planning review, rather than new locations.

PM's holiday leaves Haigh in charge

Ben Clatworthy Whitehall Editor

Andy Burnham will be on holiday for the rest of the week as the new prime minister takes a long-planned break.

Aides were understood to be keen that the prime minister pressed ahead with his family holiday. Downing Street refused to say where he was travelling.

Louise Haigh, the first secretary of state, will be the most senior working minister but sources insisted she was not deputising for the prime minister.

Lee Anderson, the chairman of Reform UK, said: "Two weeks into the job and Andy Burnham has already had enough. After dropping a number of unfunded commitments and overseeing over 2,000 illegal migrants breaking into our country he's bunked off for a jolly abroad."

Is your plan just designed to keep you afloat, Nigel?

Tom Peck
Political Sketch

Where has Nigel Farage been hiding? Somewhere sunny by the looks of things. When he wandered on stage for his first Westminster news conference since May, he looked like Ray Winstone, supine on his sun lounger in the opening scene of the cult gangster movie *Sexy Beast*, seconds before he narrowly avoids certain death from a falling boulder.

It was the kind of tan that draws breath. Owners of the Crayola Ultimate 152-piece crayon set may describe it as somewhere between raw umber and burnt sienna. That luscious deep bronze which your average Brit tends to achieve only after several years of retirement on the Costa del Sol, not that such a thing is technically legal anymore, another of Farage's achievements for which he is so rarely thanked.

The boulders have been coming for Farage for some time now. The £5 million gift from the Thai-based crypto-billionaire was the big one, which must have seemed lucky at the time, but isn't doing wonders for his political career.

His own narrative goes, rather like Winstone's *Sexy Beast*, that he was happily retired, living his best life, but was then lured back in for one last job, which was to reluctantly lead Reform through not one but two general elections and ultimately become prime minister.

He was, he would explain, definitely right not to declare the gift, because his political career was over and he had no intention of returning. And then, OK, yes, he did return, but he definitely didn't know he was going to return, despite whatever agreements and documents you might have seen.

He'd brought his self-identifying "shadow home secretary" Zia Yusuf with him, and the pair of them were launching Operation Fortress. This is their plan to use Royal Navy patrol boats to return migrant dinghies to France, and is very nearly identical to the same plan they announced last summer.

Farage harked back to the good old days, specifically the "Breaking Point" poster he revealed in 2016. That was the one that featured queues of Syrian and Afghan migrants at the border of Croatia and Slovenia. "The point of that poster was to say that Europe has given itself massive problems that we can avoid if we leave," he said.

And yet, somehow, here we all are, ten years later, with Farage still having to give press conferences about illegal immigration. What went wrong? He didn't quite explain.

Both he and Yusuf used the phrase "fighting-age males" several times. Do they want to fight? Or do they want to live in an asylum hotel and maybe illegally drive a food delivery moped? They never seem sure. But it is nevertheless true that a lot of people onboard those dinghies are "fighting-age males". Not that long ago, an Afghan male of "fighting age" set off on a dinghy to reach the UK. We know he was of fighting age because he was a special forces soldier who'd fought alongside British troops in Afghanistan but been offered no safe route here to claim asylum after the Taliban takeover.

Operation Fortress will involve escorting dinghies back to France and compassionately unloading their sad human cargo back on the beaches from where they came. Yusuf did his best to pre-empt questions about the potential consequences of sailing Royal Navy patrol boats into French waters without permission, which could technically count as an invasion of a Nato ally.

"Now look," he said, "we would far rather disembark people in port, walk people down a gangway and hand them to the French authorities properly. That is more dignified and it is what we will negotiate for."

But if it doesn't happen then, well, little Johnny Froggy will just have to suck it up. What are they going to do about it?

"Would a president of France order French police onto a beach to block Royal Marines on a humanitarian mission from landing civilians in safety and forcing them back out to sea directly endangering their lives?" he wondered. "That would be a crime against humanity."

No, it's conceivable that a French president might not do that. Sadly Yusuf is quite a new character in the rolling farce that is British politics. He wasn't around in the peak Brexit years, when various politicians came to discover, a tiny bit too late, that quite a lot of really rather crucial food that British people eat arrives in the UK on lorries from France, and that French presidents therefore have quite a bit of leverage, and that politics by way of grandstanding threat doesn't achieve all that much.

In the end, all the questions were about Farage's apparent agreement to return to lead the party, as revealed in The Sunday Times. "Oh, well," he said. "Questions about money could go on for years!"

He would explain that he had no "intention" of returning as leader, he was just having a few casual conversations about what might happen if he did. And then he did.

Nevertheless, Farage appears to still be standing. The boulders, for now, have narrowly missed. But without wishing to give away the entire plot, Reform's very own sexy beast might already be wishing he'd not been persuaded out of retirement for one last rather poorly paid job.

News

Plagiarism-row professor loses support from head of college

Emma Yeomans

The president of a Cambridge college has withdrawn her support for the Cambridge professor Jason Arday after he appeared to admit plagiarising parts of his PhD thesis.

Professor Dame Ijeoma Uchegbu, a nanoscientist and the head of Wolfson College, had previously signed an open letter in support of Arday that was circulated by the Good Law Project.

Arday, who was the youngest black professor to be appointed by the university, has been accused of plagiarism and exaggerating his sporting and fundraising achievements.

The letter was also signed by Lord Woolley of Woodford, the principal of Homerton College; Sonita Alleyne, the master of Jesus College, where Arday is a fellow; and politicians including Zack Polanski and John McDonnell.

Jason Arday says he is being unfairly portrayed as a "liar and fantasist"

However, Uchegbu's name no longer appears on the site, having been removed over the weekend.

In addition to being Wolfson president, Uchegbu is a fellow of the Academy of Medical Sciences, an honorary fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry, and a Wellcome Trust governor.

Arday, a professor of sociology of education, is alleged to have plagiarised his PhD thesis and parts of his published academic research. He has also been accused of lying about or exaggerating parts of his life, including claims to have run 600 miles in six days, and raising more than £5 million for charity.

He denied fabricating stories about marathon running and raising millions for charity, although he conceded he was part of a fundraising "syndicate" rather than doing it all himself, and that he had run 600 miles in 12 days, not six. Arday told The Times: "I accept responsibility that I could have been really, really explicit" in correcting that narrative. He said: "I am accountable for the mistakes I've made. I hold myself accountable and other people should hold me accountable. We're talking about academia here. I didn't murder somebody. I think the cruelty that I've experienced and the positioning of me as this kind of liar and fantasist is totally unacceptable."

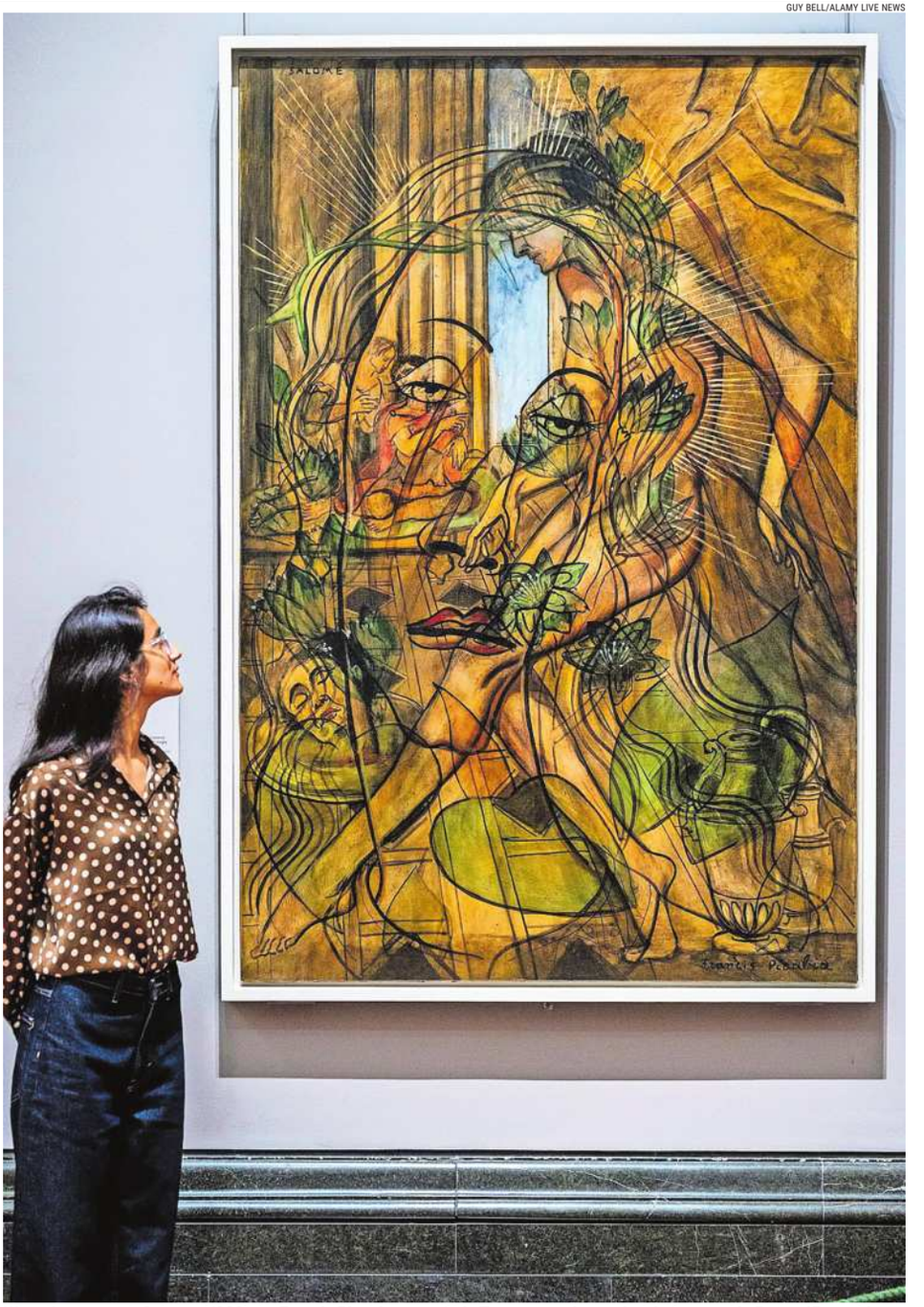
Other academics have said the alleged plagiarism and academic misconduct require serious investigation. Professor Colin Mills, the head of Oxford's sociology department, wrote on X: "I do not want the reputation of my discipline, my department, my hard-working and intellectually honest colleagues, or myself smeared by indirect association with academic fraud, low academic standards, and clownish statements from people in positions of authority who should know better."

When John Moores University, which awarded Arday's PhD, investigated, he did not dispute the specific allegations of plagiarism but said the misconduct panel should consider the political context of a "war on critical race theory" and the weaponisation of plagiarism allegations against black researchers.

Last night the WaterAid charity cast doubt on claims Arday had made about "installing water points" in South America and west Africa, saying that it never sent volunteers abroad.

According to The Daily Telegraph, Arday's biography on the website of his speakers' agency, the Simon & Schuster Speakers Bureau, stated until recently: "He has also undertaken and completed relief work in South America and west Africa with WaterAid installing water points, which provide drinkable and clean water."

GUY BELL/ALAMY LIVE NEWS



What lies beneath Salome (1930), by Francis Picabia, part of his Transparencies period, is featured in Room 45, marking a rare inclusion of mid-20th-century avant-garde art within the National Gallery's traditional Western European collection

YouTube songs stoke boundary dispute

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

A six-inch strip of land and an ornamental squirrel triggered a 14-year legal battle featuring derogatory online songs and more than £150,000 in damages and costs.

Philip New and his wife, Denise, first sued their neighbours, Steve and Karen Gibson, after a row broke out in 2012 over the position of a fence between their gardens near Benfleet in Essex.

What was initially a minor spat escalated into a court battle after the Gibsons were said to have been devastated when their neighbours removed a "sentimentally valuable" squirrel ornament from a post between the houses.

Mr Gibson was also shocked to learn that Philip New, a composer of comedy songs, had written and published derogatory ditties about the legal tussle on YouTube. One offered robust advice on how to deal with bad neighbours, including the lyrics: "Throw shit at their window, shit at the door/ Call him a wanker, call her a whore."

On his YouTube channel, New says that he has written more than 25 songs and some are sung by an artificial intelligence-generated female voice. The songs have been removed, but New has acknowledged on the platform that he has written about his neighbours, among other topics ranging from "anxiety, loneliness, fairytales and exploiting the benefit system".

The dispute began in 2012 when the News replaced some fence panels, prompting their neighbours to complain that the structure was in the wrong place and not in a straight line.

An independent surveyor was appointed to determine the boundary in 2015, but the News disagreed with that determination and sought a second opinion by another surveyor, which led to a court battle when the Gibsons sued in 2018. After a judge at Southend county court ruled against the News in 2022, they were ordered last year to pay their neighbours £13,305 in damages and interest and handed lawyers' bills estimated at about £120,000.

But the litigants were back in court last month after the News launched a High Court appeal against the damages sum, arguing it was too high and that the costs bill should also be overturned.

Mr Justice Thompsell reduced the damages by £700, but handed the News a £19,000 bill for their neighbours' costs. He said that their motivation for appealing had been to secure a big enough reduction in damages to allow them also to avoid having to pay their neighbours' costs. The ruling means the News will have to pay their neighbours £12,600 in damages, £19,000 to cover lawyers' bills for the appeal, and the proceedings at the county court, estimated at about £120,000.

Parents denied refunds as elite school cancels course

Georgia Lambert

Parents who paid thousands of pounds for places on a prestigious private school's summer programme have been told they will not receive refunds after the course was cancelled at late notice.

Kensington Park School, an independent school in west London, wrote to parents and overseas agents on July 30 informing them that the last two weeks of its summer school, due to start on August 2, would no longer go ahead.

In the email, seen by The Times, the school said the cancellation was "due to circumstances outside the school's control" and that it was undergoing a restructuring process that "will not be concluded in time for the summer course to take place".

The co-educational day and boarding school, where fees start from £29,850 a year for domestic students, is owned by Star Education Investment Limited, a Chinese company.

Parents with questions were directed to Kroll Advisory, the restructuring firm working with the school.

Residential places on the course cost £3,940 for two weeks, including tuition, accommodation, meals and activities. Non-residential places cost £1,550.

Kroll told one parent that the school was "experiencing a period of significant financial distress" and was unable to deliver the summer school. Its representative said: "In respect of refunds or compensation due, regrettably we advise the school is not in a financial position to honour refunds at this stage."

Kensington Park School and Kroll were approached for comment.

NHS surgeon who wrongly joined organs together is struck off

Jonathan Ames Legal Editor

A surgeon has been struck off after nearly killing a patient through a botched operation that resulted in the contents of a man's bowels passing into his stomach.

Yasser Abdel Rahman was performing emergency surgery on a patient when he connected the wrong part of the man's small intestine to his stomach, a tribunal heard. It was branded a significant surgical error and part of a "totally unconventional operation".

Rahman told the patient's family that the procedure had been successful, despite the man being left in "uncontrollable pain" because his bowel and stomach were in a "closed loop", the tribunal said. According to the tribunal report, Rahman's blunder meant the patient's bowel contents had "nowhere to go apart from back into the stomach in a circular fashion".

As a result, the patient did not have a bowel movement for three weeks and he would have died if a different surgeon had not performed a second operation to repair the damage.

Rahman — who qualified as a doctor in Cairo in 1993 — was said never to have apologised or admitted he had made a mistake. The surgeon, who said that he was the victim of a "witch hunt", was struck off by the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service for serious professional misconduct after his mistake was judged to be "as bad as it gets".

At the time of the operation in 2020, Rahman was working at the Royal Oldham Hospital in Greater Manchester as a consultant general and colorectal surgeon. He was a locum and had only worked there for a few days before performing an emergency operation on a man who was suffering from a tumour in his perforated small bowel.

Rahman performed a five-hour operation in which he cut the small bowel, leaving "two ends". In a statement, he said that he and a vascular surgeon decided to connect the intestine to the stomach so the "digestive/bowel continuity is maintained".

He said a test was done to make sure there were no "obstructions that would prevent digestive-bowel continuity". But after the surgery, the patient, who has not been identified, reported "uncontrollable" pain, vomiting and an inability to have bowel movements — which indicated "the procedure was not a success", the tribunal said.

A nurse noted that Rahman was "dismissive" of her concern that the patient had no bowel movements for weeks.

Rahman told the patient's parents that he would send the man home once the pain was under control and that "all the signs" indicated that his bowels would work soon.

Several days later, Anthony Rate, a consultant general and colorectal surgeon at the hospital, took over the patient's care after his family and nursing staff raised concerns. A second emergency operation then revealed Rahman had made "grave" surgical errors. Rate was said to have salvaged some of the patient's bowel.

The tribunal was told that Rahman already had conditions placed on his ability to practise and concluded his fitness to practise was impaired by misconduct, and struck him off the register.

Afghan with American wife is held over suitcase 'murder'

George Odling Athens

An Afghan champion boxer whose family were wiped out by the Taliban has been arrested over the alleged murder of a British woman in Athens.

Sharif Ahmadzai, 26, is accused of killing Elisabeth-Jane Ross, 38, dumping her body in a suitcase in a derelict building and using her bank cards to withdraw thousands of euros.

He also allegedly used Ross's mobile phone to send messages to friends and family for days after her death.

Police said initial medical reports suggested that the victim, from Edinburgh, died from asphyxiation, but they are awaiting toxicology reports.

Ahmadzai's wife, Alaina Hall, from Georgia in the United States, is understood to have given key evidence to police against her husband when she became suspicious he was involved in Ross's death.

The couple's website states that his father, a military commander in Kabul, survived six assassination attempts but was shot dead in a Taliban ambush when Ahmadzai was four. Five years later, his older brother was kidnapped by the Taliban and, when he was 15, his mother, brother and sister were killed in a suicide car bomb. Ahmadzai had to identify the remains of his siblings.

In 2016, Ahmadzai hired a people smuggler with the aim of reaching Britain, where his aunt lives. He travelled through Pakistan, Iran and Turkey before arriving on the Greek island of Lesbos on a small boat on his third attempt. He has written a book about his experiences titled *From Hell to Home*.

Ahmadzai met Hall, a devout Christian, while she was volunteering at the Moria migrant camp on Lesbos. He converted to Christianity in 2017 and sent Hall, who was a friend at the time, a video of his baptism.

Hall wrote online that the pair bonded in Athens and began dating in 2021. "I had seen his growth and his heart for the Lord and it was so attractive to me," she wrote. The couple married in April 2023 and set up a ministry helping refugees in Athens named Love Every Nation. Their son was born in April.

The couple are understood to have met Ross, also a Christian volunteer, through their work and police sources said the Athens flat where the victim was living was linked to the organisation. Ahmadzai and his wife had access to the property.

Ahmadzai, a competitive boxer, won a Greek super lightweight title in March and ran classes to raise money for the NGO. He trains at the Panellinios boxing club in Kypseli, across the road from where Ross's body was discovered.

Sharif Ahmadzai, who married Alaina Hall in 2023, is accused of killing Elisabeth-Jane Ross. Below, CCTV of the suspect

Legal papers state Hall became suspicious of her husband when she woke early on July 16 to find that he was gone, then traced him to Ross's accommodation via the Find My Friends app. A Greek police source said: "The testimony of the wife has been crucial ... Without her and CCTV evidence, we would not have been able to find this man."

Last night, Greek media published CCTV footage showing a man matching Ahmadzai's description wheeling a suitcase down a road in Kypseli. About 13 minutes later, according to The Toc, a news website, the man was seen returning without the suitcase. A photo posted on Ahmadzai's Instagram account in May shows him wearing the same shorts as the man in the footage, and a leaked police crime report revealed officers had allegedly obtained security footage of him walking on the street where the body was dumped.

Greek police said the suspect had confessed to dumping Ross's body but insisted that he had found her dead in her bathroom. He was charged with murder, robbery and illegal possession of a weapon, and is expected to appear at court in Athens tomorrow.

Police chief paid £55,000 after sex on duty claims

The former chief constable of Hampshire police, accused of having sex while on duty, was paid more than £55,000 after he quit when it emerged that he was under investigation.

Scott Chilton resigned last year following 33 years of service after a police watchdog announced he was being investigated over claims of gross misconduct relating to sexual relationships with two officers.

He is accused of having had a sexual relationship with a more junior officer while serving as chief constable, and having sex with a junior officer while on duty earlier in his career.

Chilton was paid £55,154 as "compensation for loss of employment" after he quit with immediate effect. It is understood to relate to a payment in lieu of working his notice period.

He is due to appear at a misconduct hearing in October, when the allegations against him will be considered.

The misconduct notice alleges that he abused "his position for a sexual purpose having a sexual relationship with an officer while chief constable and failed to declare this relationship".

Chilton is also accused of failing to "disclose a previous sexual relationship with another officer during the application process to become chief constable".

It is alleged that he "repeatedly and dishonestly" denied allegations when questioned by senior figures in the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Scott Chilton quit as chief constable of Hampshire police during a misconduct inquiry

Hampshire police and crime commissioner Donna Jones met Chilton at her home in November 2024 to discuss his future. They met again at police headquarters on February 12 last year and she made a referral to the Independent Office for Police Conduct two weeks later.

On why Chilton received the large sum after he quit, a police spokesperson said: "On Mr Chilton's resignation, he received £55,154 as pay in lieu of notice (as opposed to him working the three month period in his contract)."

Former detective Chilton started in the top job in February 2023, having transferred back to Hampshire after serving as chief constable in Dorset.

Alexis Boon has replaced Chilton as chief constable of the Hampshire force.

News

Livesey quits Radio 5 after Sullivan claims

James Beal Investigations Editor
Shanti Das Senior Investigations Reporter

The presenter Tony Livesey has quit BBC Radio 5 Live weeks after being named in a joint Times and *Panorama* investigation about his former boss David Sullivan.

Livesey, 62, who worked for 5 Live for 16 years and fronted the 10pm to 1am slot, "has decided to leave his presenting role", it was announced yesterday.

In June, Livesey asked to step back from his hosting duties after allegations were made about his time editing the Sport newspapers under Sullivan. The West Ham co-owner, was accused of sexually exploitative and predatory behaviour by seven women. He has denied the allegations.

One of the alleged victims said that she felt forced to have sex with Sullivan when she did not want to. She claimed she had been introduced to him by Livesey in 1999 when he was still editing the Sport.

Livesey said that he had "huge sympathy" for the woman but had "no recollection" of introducing her to Sullivan.

He said it was "not part" of his role to introduce women to Sullivan and that he had "practically zero" contact with anyone appearing in the paper.

Tony Livesey, left, with David Sullivan in the Daily Sport newspaper offices

In an internal statement revealing Livesey's departure, Heidi Dawson, the controller of 5 Live, said he was "the first voice for us on air as we launched from our new home in Salford".

Dawson added: "Tony built a loyal late night audience, often with our greatly missed colleague, Rachael Bland, at his side. He went on to be the voice of our iconic *Drive* show for ten years where he was at the heart of our coverage of Brexit. With his final *Lates* show at 5 Live, Tony grew audience figures once again.

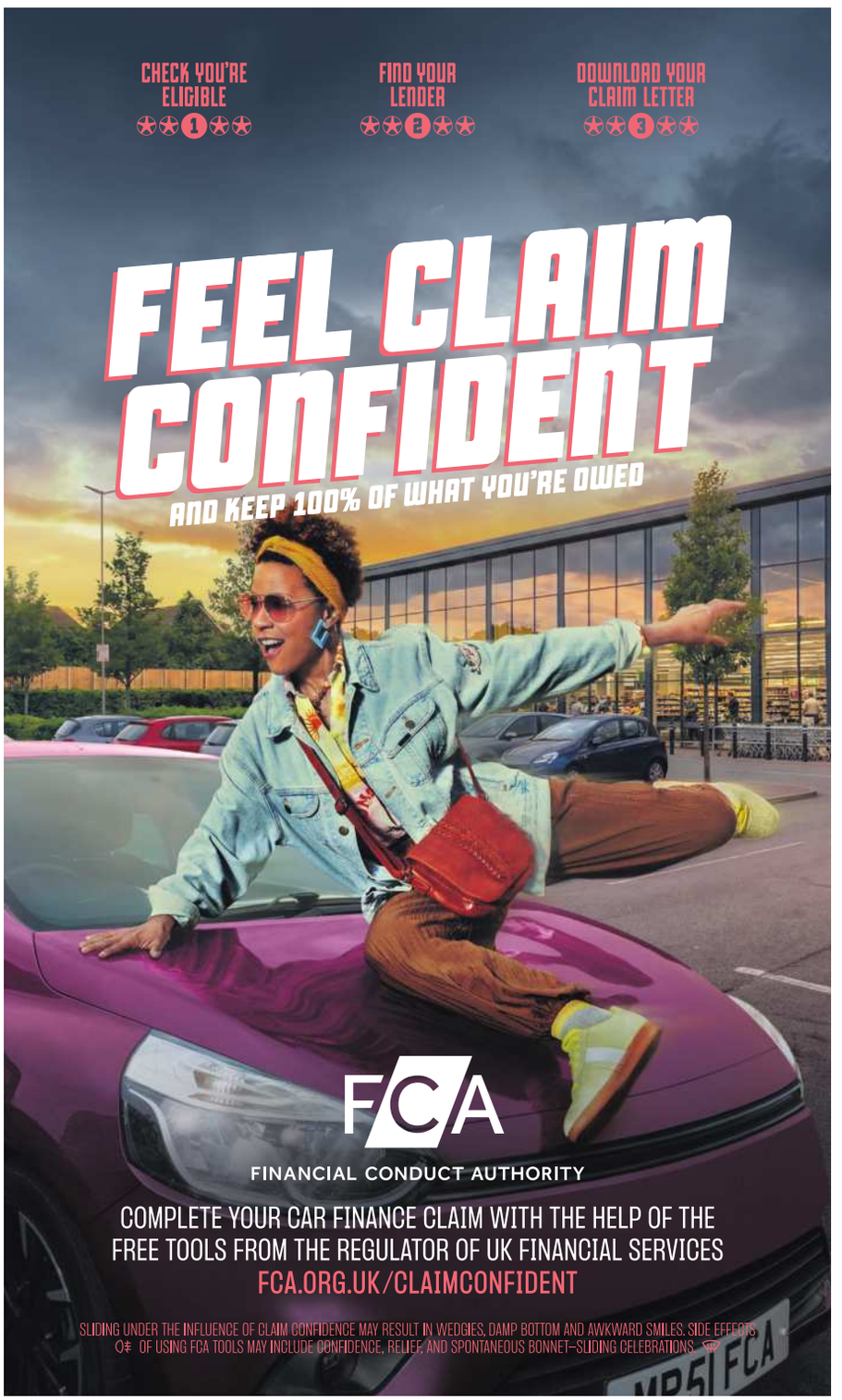
"Tony has asked me to pass on his heartfelt thanks to the brilliant colleagues at 5 Live who he has had the pleasure of working with over the years. I know many of you have also really enjoyed working with Tony, and we wish him well for all his future endeavours."

There was no mention of the allegations involving Sullivan. The 77-year-old resigned as director and co-chair of West Ham United in June, shortly before the publication of The Times and BBC *Panorama* investigation.

Livesey left his job as editor-in-chief at the Daily Sport and Sunday Sport in 2006 after almost 18 years. He joined BBC Radio Lancashire the same year before becoming a presenter of the 5 Live late-night show.

In his 1998 book *Babes, Booze, Orgies and Aliens*, Livesey wrote that he and Sullivan hatched a plan for the Sport's "Countdown to 16" feature, which charted the days until the 16th birthday of a number of girls, after which it would print topless photos of them. He has since said "large parts of his book were fictionalised" and having a model appear in the paper at the age of 16 "was categorically not my idea".

Livesey was approached for comment yesterday.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1
FIND YOUR LENDER
2
DOWNLOAD YOUR CLAIM LETTER
3
FEEL CLAIM CONFIDENT
AND KEEP 100% OF WHAT YOU'RE OWED
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FCA.ORG.UK/CLAIMCONFIDENT
SLIDING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF CLAIM CONFIDENCE MAY RESULT IN WEDGIES, DAMP BOTTOM AND AWKWARD SMILES. SIDE EFFECTS OF USING FCA TOOLS MAY INCLUDE CONFIDENCE, RELIEF AND SPONTANEOUS BONNET-SLIDING CELEBRATIONS.

TIMES PHOTOGRAPHER JAMES GLOSSOP

Holy horseman Costumed revellers take part in St Wilfrid's Procession in Ripon, an event thought to date to 1108 celebrating the Yorkshire city's patron saint

Trainspotting musical's tour ditched over low ticket sales

The forthcoming UK tour for *Trainspotting: The Musical* has been cancelled after receiving "lower than expected ticket sales", it has been announced.

The theatrical production is an adaptation of Irvine Welsh's 1993 novel of the same name, which follows a heroin addict in Edinburgh navigating poverty, friendship and addiction alongside his dysfunctional peers.

The musical had its West End debut last month and was due to kick off its UK tour in autumn — with shows planned in major cities such as Edinburgh, Sheffield, Manchester and York.

A statement to the Press Association from a representative for the production said: "The forthcoming UK tour of Trainspotting: The Musical, which was due to begin on October 19, has been cancelled.

"We are very grateful to our cast, crew and creative team for their dedication to the production, but the current economic climate has resulted in lower than expected ticket sales. Ticketholders will be contacted by their point of purchase with full refund details. We apologise for any inconvenience and disappointment this may cause."

The award-winning *Trainspotting* franchise has previously been adapted for the stage, but the West End production marked its world debut as a musical. One of the most popular adaptations is the 1996 hit film, which stars Ewan McGregor, Jonny Lee Miller and Robert Carlyle.

The cult classic also received a 2017 sequel — *T2 Trainspotting* — which sees Mark Renton return to Edinburgh 20 years on.

The musical adaption of Welsh's 1993 novel

Surgery in womb gave baby a lifeline

At her 20-week pregnancy scan, Maisie Savage was told her son Theo had gastroschisis, a serious birth defect where a baby's intestines develop outside the abdomen (Eleanor Hayward writes).

It is a diagnosis that would usually lead to months in a neonatal intensive care unit after birth, numerous operations as an infant and a lifetime of consequences.

But Savage, 29, and her partner, Josh French, 36, were given a "lifeline" and offered a spot on a pioneering clinical trial in the US which repairs the defect while babies are still in the womb.

The couple, teachers from north London, flew to Texas Children's Hospital in Houston for the operation at 26 weeks pregnant. Surgeons repaired Theo's defect using keyhole surgery to push his intestines back into his abdomen.

He was born three months later, in February, was breastfeeding straight away and out of hospital four days later.

"He's a little miracle, isn't he?" Savage told the BBC, adding that the surgery had "completely reversed what could have been a really horrible start to life".

She said: "He's amazing. He's so good. He's just like living life like a normal baby. He's feeding like a normal baby, growing like a normal baby."

Maisie Savage and her partner, Josh French, with Theo, who had an operation in the US to fix a birth defect that meant his intestines were developing outside his abdomen

Theo was only the third baby in the world to have the operation, and the first from the UK.

Gastroschisis affects 200 to 300 babies in Britain each year. One in ten die and, for complex cases such as Theo, they require months in intensive care.

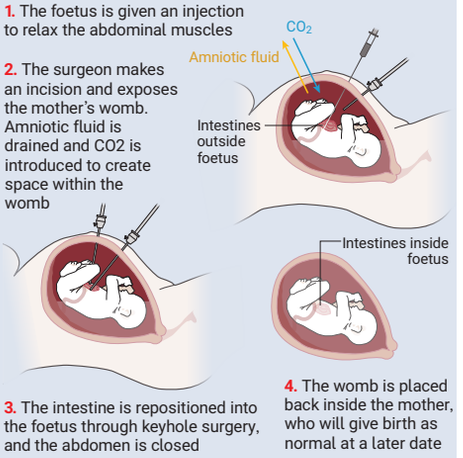
The trial is being conducted in partnership with experts at Great Ormond Street Hospital (Gosh). It builds on techniques of in-womb surgery which have been used to treat spina bifida for the past decade. By intervening early, it reduces complications.

The surgery was led by Dr Michael Belfort. If the US trial is a success, the procedure would be performed in the UK.

Professor Paolo De Coppi, a consultant fetal and paediatric surgeon at Gosh and part of the trial team, said: "Previous success rates with spina bifida indicate this could essentially offer a cure for gastroschisis. If the results are positive, we hope this could become the standard operation ... Families can go home sooner after birth with a healthy baby that shows few signs of their bumpy start in life."

Striking achievement, leading article, page 23

How it works


1. The foetus is given an injection to relax the abdominal muscles
2. The surgeon makes an incision and exposes the mother's womb. Amniotic fluid is drained and CO2 is introduced to create space within the womb
CO_2
Amniotic fluid
Intestines outside foetus
Intestines inside foetus
3. The intestine is repositioned into the foetus through keyhole surgery, and the abdomen is closed
4. The womb is placed back inside the mother, who will give birth as normal at a later date

'Summit selfies' with children are peak of recklessness, claims guide

Peter Chappell

Summiting a mountain peak used to be an ambition which took a reality check when children became involved.

But taking the kids on a high-altitude excursion has grown in popularity since the pandemic as a new generation of parents sees little difference between family time and adventure.

A mountain guide and former commando has now railed against the trend, arguing that parents should not be snapping "summit selfies" with children who are unable to object to their parents' grand hiking plans.

Callum Tipton, a guide in Snowdon, criticised climbers with babies in carriers in an online post entitled: "What Not To Do on Yr Wyddfa" (The Welsh name for Snowdon).

"I'll probably upset a few people here, but so be it," Tipton, who runs an organisation which helps men combat depression through hiking, said.

"Your baby doesn't need a summit selfie. They can't tell you they're cold, they can't regulate their temperature like you can, and while your body keeps their core warm, their hands and feet are exposed to the elements. Just because you can take a baby up a mountain doesn't mean you should."

For nature-loving couples with children such as Hanako Shimada and Adam Searle, Tipton's comments could not be further from their experience of hiking with their three-year-old, Makiko. "We love it," Hanako said.

Keen to give their daughter a screen-free childhood, she said the obvious answer was to try to spend as much time outside as possible.

"When she was smaller she would fit in our hiking backpack. That was really great, especially when you're ascending. If you just put them in the backpack sometimes they nap, and going down [the mountain] is really fun for them to run down."

When Makiko got too big for the backpack, her parents took her on more circular routes so she would not get as tired.

Hanako said exploring in Snowdon was "easy" as they stayed to the quieter paths, and they took lots of breaks and snacks. They made sure to take lots of pictures at the summit to record their achievement.

Adam Searle carries his three-year-old daughter Makiko on a hike

Makiko's mother praised the outdoors for improving her daughter's balance and curious instincts, as well as allowing her to get as muddy as she liked.

Matt Cooper, from The Mountaineering Company, strongly disagreed with the idea that children shouldn't be taken to summits, as long as the correct safety measures are observed. He said if people followed Tipton's logic, Scandinavian or Canadian children would never leave the house.

"We've got to be overcautious to some degree with children given how precious they are, we also need to introduce children to the mountains at a young age because it creates a bond with the parents and lasting memories.

"Generally its incredibly beneficial to the parent-child relationship. I'm all for it, I think it's the right thing, as long as the parent is prioritising the child's welfare rather than their own goals."

He said parents have limited time, and they want to have special experiences with their children.

"Nowadays parents don't put their life on hold for years and years. Making the most of that finite time with your children. They're only young for so long — I think it's great," he said.

Cooper said the risks in the mountains weren't much different to taking a child for a walk in downtown Manchester, if the parents are being sensible and risk-averse. He said that people should be aware of "gate-keeping" the mountains for themselves.

Tortoise on tracks leads to rail havoc

Bill Curtis

From signal failures to extreme weather, train passengers may think that they have heard every excuse for delays, but commuters boarding at Runcorn last Wednesday were shocked to discover the latest reason for a hold-up: a trespassing tortoise.

Barnaby, who is believed to be 50 years old, was rescued by rail staff after he was spotted making slow progress along the West Coast mainline. Trains coming through the station had to be halted as Avanti West Coast staff went on the tracks to retrieve the animal. The rescue mission took about ten minutes and the reptile was taken to a rescue centre, where it was cared for overnight before being reunited with its owner.

Network Rail said the short delay meant that passengers could still "hare it to their destinations".

Theo Griffiths, 20, who frequently travels for work, said train operators should not try to "laugh off" delays. He said: "How is it possible that a little tortoise can bring national infrastructure to a standstill? We need a culture like Japan, where staff feel guilty when people are inconvenienced."

News

‘Vampire’ who left dead lambs outside churches defanged

Jessica Sharkey Crime Correspondent

A blood-drinking Satanist who believes he is a vampire has been detained under the Mental Health Act after placing deer heads and slaughtered lambs with inverted crosses at churches.

Benjamin Lewis, who police say believes he is a “reincarnated vampire”, previously pleaded guilty to religiously aggravated harassment and theft of lambs between February and August last year.

The 48-year-old, from Totton, Southampton, raided farms in the middle of the night and “maimed and disfigured” the bodies of deer and lambs before dumping them at churches across the New Forest, Hampshire.

Lewis had had a “fascination with vampires” from a young age and had been in a vampire cult with other members whom he would regularly meet, Southampton crown court heard yesterday. Police said he drank the blood of animals he slaughtered because he thought it would make him live forever.

At a previous hearing, he told a judge his name was “Count Dracula” before correcting himself.

Sentencing Lewis, who appeared by video link, to an indefinite hospital order, Judge William Mousley KC said: “These offences, taken together, would otherwise have justified substantial sentences of imprisonment. That is clear before taking into consideration his previous convictions which, although a long time ago, demonstrate worrying similar behaviour.”

Laura Deuxberry, for the prosecution, told the court that lambs had been stolen from two small farms in the Hampshire area. After killing them, Lewis dumped their bodies at four churches and a mental health facility at which he had been a patient.

Items including sketches of vampires and dead sheep, newspaper cuttings relating to death, satanic symbols, and inverted crosses were found in his home. He also left a deer’s head on the gate outside accommodation for vulnerable adults in which he had stayed previously.

In 2003 he was convicted of religious harassment in the first case of its kind and was jailed for 12 months for terrorising a vicar and his family by claiming to be a vampire.

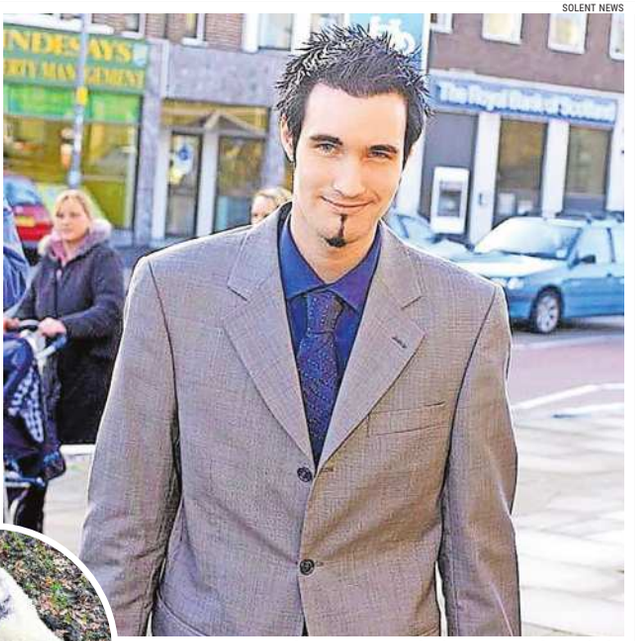
Deuxberry told the court that when Lewis was arrested last year deer blood was found in the boot of his car, along with mixed animal blood in the vehicle.

When police searched his home, they found satanic symbols and ritual notes, sketches of vampires and “books about vampires and how best to kill humans”. Lewis caused congregations “to be fearful of going to their sanctuaries”, Deuxberry said.

Dr Gauruv Malhan, a consultant forensic psychiatrist, told the court that Lewis had diagnoses of severe autism, obsessive-compulsive disorder, mixed personality disorder and a mild learning disability.

Andrew Price, defending, said: “He is very sorry and wants it to be known and clear that he recognises that he has done wrong.” Lewis told the court: “I want to just apologise to the victims because they said they were worried about me if I was to come out. I do not want people to worry about me.”

SOLENT NEWS



Benjamin Lewis outside court. He marked remains with symbols

Calm down! Fake Scousers had heist row

Peter Chappell

A pair of hapless armed robbers were caught by police after bickering between themselves and pretending they were from Liverpool during a raid just five minutes from where they lived.

Stephen Bradley and David Oakley held up Maddy’s convenience store in New Mills, Derbyshire, with an imitation firearm and Liverpool football scarves wrapped around their heads.

They entered in November last year and threatened the shopkeeper, ordering her to empty the till as one cleared the shelves. The pair proclaimed they were from Liverpool and needed to get back on the motorway quickly.

They asked the shopkeeper for help with putting the coins in the bag as they were wearing gloves and began to argue as they made their getaway.

Bradley and Oakley were captured on CCTV footage and identified by witnesses, the Derbyshire Times reported.

Armed police arrived at the pair’s house where officers found a large amount of tobacco, nine bottles of Jack Daniel’s and a pellet gun. It was also reported £200 was stolen from the till.

The pair appeared at Manchester Minshull Street crown court, where Bradley, 56, of New Mills, admitted robbery and possession of an imitation firearm. Oakley, 48, of no fixed address, admitted robbery and possession of a knife. Both were jailed for four years.

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iPhone 17 Pro 256GB	36m	£30	£31	£1,116.12	£1,146.12	0%	0%	£1,146.12	Unlimited Ultimate	£32.99	£35.49	£37.99	£63.99	£66.49	£68.99

£514 saving consists of £46.20 discount applied to Device Plan (total cost of device was £1192.32 now £1146.12) and further £468 saving achieved by £13 per month discount on the Unlimited Ultimate Airtime Plan for 36 months. £30 upfront. Airtime discount applies until you change tariff, leave or upgrade. Subject to availability. Premium delivery available between £5.99 and £9.99. 14-day cooling off and other cancellation rights apply. Ends 5 August 2026. Direct purchases only. Pay the cash price for your device or spread the cost over 3 to 36 months (excludes dongles). Certain device costs available to be spread over 3 to 48 months. The device cost will be the same whatever you choose. There may be an upfront cost. You can pay off your Device Plan at any time and choose to keep your Airtime Plan, upgrade it, or leave. If you are in the first 24 months of your Device Plan and you cancel your Airtime Plan you will have to pay the remainder of your Device Plan in full. After 24 months you can keep your Airtime Plan, upgrade it, or end it without affecting your Device Plan. UK calls/texts to standard UK landlines and mobiles and when roaming in our Europe Zone. Europe Zone data only. Fair usage policy applies. Special and out of bundle numbers chargeable. Fair usage applies. Use tariff allowances when roaming in our Europe Zone. O2 Travel Inclusive includes unlimited minutes and texts and data roaming (with capped data speeds of 2 Mbps) in our Inclusive Zone. Non-commercial use only. Traffic management steps will apply. Terms apply, see o2.co.uk/terms Devices subject to availability. 0% APR. Finance subject to status and credit checks. 18+. Direct Debit. Credit provided by Telefónica UK Ltd, RG2 6UU. Telefónica UK is authorised and regulated by the FCA for consumer credit and insurance. See o2.co.uk/terms

DRONEMAN/PICTUREEXCLUSIVE.COM; BAV MEDIA; ROBIN FORMSTONE FOR THE TIMES

Farms' prospects of survival wilt in heat

British farmers are giving up growing food after repeated heatwaves cause their harvests to fail and their finances to falter (Will Humphries and Ben Cooke write).

Some believe growing food is too financially risky and the only way to make their farms profitable is by using their land and buildings for other businesses.

The National Farmer's Union has warned there could be a shortage of certain food products if the drought continues. Its president, Tom Bradshaw, said yields of wheat and oats were "very, very poor" this year and that livestock farmers had had to use winter feed rations because they had been unable to grow grass.

Vegetable producers were running low on water, reducing the amount of food produced here and increasing the cost of growing it.

Drought has been declared across large parts of England and the whole of Wales after successive heatwaves left water supplies strained.

John Pawsey, who runs a 650-hectare organic farm near Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, and contract farms 850 hectares of farmland, is aiming to pull as much land out of food production as possible, after his yields on malting barley, oats and milling wheat this year were down 30 per cent on the ten-year average for his farm.

"The margin on food production is so small, so any offer that comes along to use our land for recreation, or whatever, is more attractive than growing food. You only have to look around and there is so much land out of production. Fields are full of environmental schemes, anything but food," Pawsey said.

A move to more environmental schemes may not save farms. The Labour government capped the maximum a farm can earn from them at £100,000 a year.

Paul Behrens, a professor in environmental change at Oxford, said this year's harvest would be almost as bad as that of 2020, the worst on record. Harvests in 2024 and 2025 were also among the five worst. "One bad harvest, one warm year, that's weather. But three of the worst harvests in the last five years? That's climate change," he said.

George Tomlinson, 29, a fifth generation organic farmer near Wrexham, north Wales, has been forced to sell 60 cows from his 550-strong dairy herd because the cost of feeding them winter forage instead of grazing them in normally lush fields proved too much.

Tomlinson, who farms with his brother Will, 27, said their straw and corn yields were down 60 per cent and they had had to buy 500 tonnes of forage. "No other industry has so little control over three major aspects that affect our ability to make a living — weather, regulation and the price we get paid," he said.

"If something isn't changed soon, with years like this, there won't be many people left to grow food in this country. That is a scary place to be."

Pea farmers driven to crop swaps, page 37

George Tomlinson, above right, and brother Will are having to sell cattle. Top, a parched landscape in Essex and harvesting in Marazion, Cornwall

Baking July was the driest since 1836

Adam Vaughan Environment Editor

England and Wales had their driest July on record, bringing water restrictions, damage to crops and wildfires.

The Met Office said the month was the driest July since records began in 1836, with "truly remarkable" conditions that saw some areas without any rain at all.

Across England, there was 90 per cent less rain than average for the month. Southern England was even worse, with a reduction of 97 per cent compared to the long-term average.

The lack of rain has seen half of England slide into drought status, which allows regulators and water companies to take action to secure water supplies. Drought has been declared across the whole of Wales. About 23 million people are under a hosepipe ban.

Wisley in Surrey is among the areas that saw no rain in July. Like cricket pitches and village greens across the country, the lawn at the Royal Horticultural Society's Wisley Garden has turned brown.

The charity said "large areas" of the gardens had browned because it does not irrigate lawns during dry weather. The group advised gardeners against watering established lawns. The stored rainwater has been almost exhausted and Tim Upton at the RHS said the gardens are relying on drawing water from the River Wey for some plants.

The drought this year, described as a "flash drought" because it came on quickly after a wet winter, means three of the last five years have seen droughts. Warmer and wetter winters, combined with hotter and drier summers, are in line with what scientists expect the UK to experience due to climate change.

The UK had its second warmest July on record, while Wales recorded its joint warmest July ever. The month saw England, Wales and the UK record their sunniest calendar month on record.

Dr Amy Doherty, science manager at the Met Office, said: "The combination of record-breaking dryness, exceptional warmth and unprecedented sunshine has delivered one of the most notable summer months in our historical records."

The weather has posed serious challenges for farmers, with particular concern over brassica crops including broccoli. Water companies have reported demand for water increasing by up to a third during the warm conditions.

"The continued hot, dry weather is having significant impacts on agriculture and the environment and is increasing demand for water," said Lucy Barker, a hydrologist at the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology.

Many rivers in the UK are lower than this time last year, when drought was widespread, she said. Those include the Tweed in Northumberland, the Colne in Essex and the Wye in Herefordshire.

A wildfire at Dunwich Heath in Suffolk is still ablaze. A helicopter was used to tackle the fire on Monday, with the Suffolk Fire and Rescue service braced for a rise in temperatures on Tuesday.

One of the positives of a sunny July has been a record amount of electricity generated from solar panels. Solar power supplied more electricity in Great Britain during July than in any previous month, providing 14.4 per cent of the total. The previous record, 12.4 per cent, was set in May, according to data from the National Energy System Operator (Neso).

About 1.7 million homes have solar panels, according to trade body Solar Energy UK. Many householders rushed to install solar panels after the Iran war started, with one installed every three minutes since March.

Emma Hardy, the water minister, said: "Our climate is changing, droughts are becoming increasingly common, and we need to be prepared to cope with the challenges we now face."

Heat alerts are in place for much of England until Wednesday, though temperatures may fall later in the week. The southeast will "continue to see little in the way of rain", though showers are possible, the Met Office said.

Weather, page 47

Analysis

From forests near Bordeaux and Madrid to heathland in Suffolk and the Cairngorms National Park, Europe has been blackened by wildfires this summer (Adam Vaughan writes).

The area burnt in the UK so far is less than half the record expanse that blazed last year. But the threat is ongoing.

A resident near the Suffolk fire claimed the blaze was linked to rewilding initiatives, such as allowing more deadwood. The Countryside Alliance, a rural lobbying group, has blamed rewilding for creating the conditions for UK wildfires to spread.

Some have even suggested green policies aimed at helping forests could have made the blazes worse. Víctor Resco de Dios, a professor of forestry at the University of Lleida in Spain, has argued that protected areas burn more easily. "When you remove humans out of it [the natural environment], what happens is you get more fuel, and then you get worse fires," he told the Wall Street Journal. A paper he authored last year found protected areas of forest in southwestern Europe had fallen victim to wildfires at a higher rate than unprotected areas.

"Environmental legislation has not been based on the science of ecology, or on forestry," he added. "I think it's been based on ideology, on a Walt Disney view of the world with Bambi, where you see human beings as inherently bad" for the environment. But "when you remove humans out of it, what happens is you get more fuel, and then you get worse fires." The paper also reported that in Australia and California, fires burnt more intensely on protected lands, which made them more dangerous to residents and more damaging to natural habitats.

However, Thomas Smith, assistant professor in environmental geography at the London School of Economics, believes the surge in wildfires was primarily driven by climate change.

The National Trust also believes climate change is the underlying driver of wildfire risk.

The RSPB, which runs Minsmere nature reserve where the Suffolk fire started, said the heathland "was the very antithesis of what many consider to be 'rewilding'".

CALLUM KING/SWNS

Skywalkies: dog's ashes go into space

While many dogs accompany their owners on trips around the world, few can be said to have visited the very edge of the Earth's atmosphere (Amelia Stout writes).

Determined to give his late French bulldog a "last adventure", one owner launched his pet's ashes 119,000ft into the sky in a weather balloon. They were then released into space.

Jacob Battersby, a TikToker from Stockport, arranged the tribute after Oscar, his six-year-old dog, died suddenly from a brain tumour this year.

Battersby, 26, and his friend, Callum King, also 26, from Rugby, launched the balloon from the Warwickshire town on May 7, packing a GPS tracker, cameras and Oscar's favourite *Toy Story* alien toy alongside his ashes.

After climbing to the edge of the Earth's atmosphere, where temperatures dropped to minus 72C, the balloon burst, scattering Oscar's ashes. The package then descended by parachute and landed 55 miles away near Nottinghamshire.

Battersby, who has nearly 200,000 followers on TikTok said: "It's really special. They say after about six months, his ashes will eventually return to Earth as rain. I really like the idea that a little part of him is still up there. People always look up at the sky when they're thinking about loved ones they've lost. And mine is actually up there."

King said: "Oscar couldn't see the world, so we decided to show the world Oscar. Jacob lost Oscar at the start of the year and it came completely out of the blue. He had a brain tumour and it happened so quickly. When we started planning the launch, taking his ashes up there wasn't really a question. It was just how we were going to do it. It felt like one last adventure for him."

The pair had expected the journey to last around two hours, but when the balloon stayed airborne for far longer, they feared it had been lost for ever. They had abandoned the search and headed to a pub to drown their sorrows when the GPS tracker suddenly pinged.

"We drove straight there and ended up walking through fields until we found the payload," King said. "It was an amazing feeling."

The memorial also served as a test for a pet tracker developed by the pair through their company, Zoomi.

King said it was difficult to plan for the project. "We had to calculate the amount of helium, predict where it would travel and build the payload ourselves," he said. "We expected it to be in the air for around two hours, so when that time passed, we genuinely thought it had gone for ever. Finding it proved not only that Oscar had completed his final journey, but our tracker had done exactly what it was designed to do."

Battersby, whose other bulldog, Toby, has had cancer diagnosed, said he intended to make the most of their remaining time together by planning various adventures, including a paragliding trip. "It's probably the closest she'll ever get to space, and to Oscar," he added.

A balloon with Oscar's ashes was sent to the edge of the atmosphere. It was found by Callum King, far left, and Jacob Battersby, second left

Delusional to blame Gove for youth joblessness, say Tories

Georgia Lambert
Oliver Wright Policy Editor

The Conservatives have accused Labour of a "delusional" attempt to blame Michael Gove's education reforms for a million young people not being in education, employment or training (Neets), saying that it was a consequence of tax rises for employers.

Writing in The Times yesterday, Lucy Powell, the education secretary, said Gove's policy of forcing schools to prioritise academic learning had resulted in more Neets, describing it as a direct consequence of his reforms.

Her claim was disputed by the Tories, who pointed out that a sharp rise in the number of Neets had come about after Labour won the 2024 general election.

"Labour inherited youth unemployment below the eurozone average," said Neil O'Brien, the shadow minister for policy development. "But they blasted it up with massive tax rises and more regulation. Lucy Powell blames Michael Gove for this. They're delusional."

O'Brien released figures showing that the proportion of Neets had risen from about 14 per cent when Labour came to power to more than 16 per cent.

Laura Trott, the shadow education secretary, said: "The rise in the number of children who are Neet is ascribed purely to education. This is clearly nonsense. The rise has coincided with massive hikes in the costs of employing young people and a failure to reform incentives to go onto benefits. The recent rises in youth unemployment are not a problem caused by education."

Powell wrote that she intended to take a "fresh look at what we are teaching our children and whether we are equipping them for their lives ahead" as part of moves to undo Gove's reforms.

The government is considering changes to the curriculum proposed in a review by Professor Becky Francis. Her review largely left Gove's reforms intact, but recommended that teenagers sit fewer GCSEs because of concerns that pupils were becoming overly stressed and were being taught the test instead of the subject.

Powell, who wants to introduce technical pathways for pupils as young as 14, said her reforms were not "an attack" on academic standards, but an attempt to broaden the definition of success. "The idea that academic and technical education are rivals competing for status belongs in the past. It's the same kind of tired, snobbish thinking that says the academic route is for clever children and the technical route is for the rest," she said.

Polling suggests that while people broadly agree with the proposal to value technical routes as much as academic ones, few want to see 14-year-olds locked into decisions about their careers. A More in Common poll of 3,384 adults last week found that 60 per cent believed that vocational education deserved more attention and that university had been over-emphasised. But it also found that 65 per cent thought 14 was too young for pupils to make decisions about their careers.

Graduate vacancies at their lowest at this point in the year since 2020, and seasonal work is at a four-year low. Research by the job search website Indeed showed that graduate postings were down about 7 per cent from last year.

Last year, while Phillipson was education secretary, the National Education Union said a "top-down exam factory" culture and a "stifling curriculum" were driving rising mental health problems among the young. A union survey found teachers feared continued testing would narrow the curriculum and harm pupil wellbeing.

Daniel Kebede, the union's general secretary, backed Powell's reforms, saying that "the one-size-fits-all approach to education has failed too many children and young people".

Julie McCulloch, chief executive of the Education Policy Institute, said the argument should not become a choice between academic and practical skills. She said that the academic focus in the past decade "appears to have paid dividends", but that while England had climbed international league tables, the gains had not been felt equally.

"The attainment gap between children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers remains stubbornly wide, and recent attempts to narrow it have stalled or reversed," she added.

Haroon Chowdry, chief executive of the Centre for Young Lives think tank, agreed the education system had failed too many young people. He said the number of Neets was "the ultimate verdict in the school curriculum debate".

Letters, page 22

Lucy Powell proposes technical pathways for pupils as young as 14

UK education ranking rose after 2010

Anna Dowell, Yennah Smart

When Michael Gove became education secretary in 2010, he used international data to argue for urgent reform as the UK's 15-year-olds were falling behind their peers.

Over a decade from his time in office, in which he brought in a new curriculum in England and expanded the number of academy schools, The Times has looked at the same data to determine whether Gove's reforms raised the bar for British education.

The UK's 15-year-olds have climbed global rankings since 2010 for their abilities to read, calculate and experiment, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) programme for international student assessment (Pisa) scores. British teenagers are now 11th and ninth among their OECD peers for maths and reading, up from 22nd and 20th in 2009. Science has stayed at 11th.

The UK's scores are all above the OECD average. About 690,000 pupils from 81 countries and economies took part in the most recent assessment.

However, the actual scores for reading, maths and science have hardly risen. Falling OECD peers have pushed the UK's schools up the rankings — although England is performing better than other nations in the UK.

NHS spends millions on job coaching for addicts

Eleanor Hayward Health Editor

The NHS is spending millions on one-to-one job coaching for drug addicts and patients with severe mental illness to end a "vicious cycle" of worklessness.

New data shows more than 11,000 people were helped into work by the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) scheme last year, which is available everywhere in England.

NHS patients are given tailored support from specialist employment advisers, including help CVs, job applications and interviews. They continue to receive job coaching to help them settle into work.

The service is embedded in 203 mental health clinics and 100 addiction services across England, and ministers have announced an extra £275 million investment to expand help.

People can be referred to the IPS scheme by their GP, mental health clinic or certain charities. It aims to help people start jobs within weeks of being referred, and the new data shows 11,241 who took part in the scheme found work in the past financial year.

Sir Jim Mackey, the chief executive of NHS England, told The Times: "Too many people with severe mental illness or addiction become trapped in a vicious cycle, where poor health keeps them out of work, and unemployment makes their health even worse."

He added the figures "show that with the right support, that cycle can be broken. Combining employment advice with mental health support can help people regain their confidence, independence and purpose by getting them back into work.

"So, if you're struggling with your mental health and want to get back on your feet, I'd encourage you to speak to your GP or local mental health or addiction support team to find how to get help."

The job coaching service is offered to people with severe mental illness, such as schizophrenia or bipolar disorder, as well as people struggling with drug or alcohol addiction.

Jamie Walker, from Kent, is among those to have been helped back into work by the scheme.

He said: "On paper, I was successful. I had my own distribution company and marketing company, but my life was dissolving and falling apart.

"I had fallen into a spiral of addiction and alcohol abuse. I struggled with psychosis, I experienced dissociation and was completely detached from myself. I'd lost all my money, any way of making money, and my ability to communicate. It was pretty dire."

Walker was given support from an early psychosis unit and referred to the IPS, which encouraged him to pursue a career in acting, and finding work has "helped his mental health recovery enormously".

People with severe mental illness are three to four times more likely to be out of work, while those with drug or alcohol dependency are two to four times more likely to be unemployed.

Research shows worklessness can exacerbate mental health problems including depression and anxiety. The number of people off work due to poor mental health has risen sharply since the pandemic, and nearly half of under-24s who are not in employment, education or training (Neets) cite mental health reasons.

Dr Nick Broughton, the national director for mental health, learning disability and neurodevelopmental conditions, said "behind every unemployment stat is a person who if given the right support would like to belong to a community, have a purpose to their day, and be financially independent".

Baroness Merron, the health and social care minister, said: "Getting into work can be life-changing for people's mental health and wellbeing — and these figures show what's possible when people get the right, tailored support at the right time.

"Mental health is just as important as physical health and that's why we've expanded support in schools and communities, and recruited thousands more staff to provide mental health support."

TMS

diary@thetimes.co.uk | @timesdiary

Huw's job was it anyway?

In an alternate universe, the newsreader Simon McCoy might still be the BBC's leading light. He tells *Matt Forde's Political Party* podcast that his role there was due to be beefed up before a colleague intervened. "The day before launch, the show was going to be *Afternoon Live with Simon McCoy*, but there was one presenter at the BBC, very senior, who put a stop to it," McCoy said. BBC execs may look back at this decision to cave into Huw Edwards's demands and feel they backed the wrong horse.

McCoy, below, then went on to join GB News, which was a bit of a rude awakening as the then start-up channel had basically no facilities. McCoy was chatting to a young colleague one day who said "This newsroom is not as big as my last one". The old hand asked where that had been and the lad replied, "Nottingham Trent".

LIDDLE'S FELINE FARCE

Rod Liddle, the Sunday Times columnist who has died, was baffled when readers did not get his often very dark sense of humour. He once wrote a fanciful column in which he described putting a cat on trial before building and using a miniature gibbet. Shortly after publication he was visited by the constabulary who were investigating potential animal cruelty. "You'd have thought they'd have realised it was a joke when I said that three field mice watched the execution and applauded," Liddle said.

This wasn't his only visit from the coppers. He was always amused to recall when anti-terror police popped in and said: "Your name's on a list to have your head chopped off, so we thought we'd come round and put your mind at rest."

A HEAD-SCRATCHING TALE

Professor Jason Arday is missing a pig's head. The academic, whose relationship with the truth is under scrutiny, claimed his family was sent such a porcine piece, causing the police to do a search of local butchers. The Met say that they have no record of this, but it is easier to mislay a pig's head than you think. The broadcaster Paul Heiney tells me he once helped the sculptor Michael Black acquire one for his work. It was put in an M&S bag which Black placed on a train's luggage rack, but he forgot to pick it up. When lost and found were contacted, they said: "We haven't seen anything like that but we'll keep a look out for it." You'd have thought it would have been easy to locate by one sense or another, but perhaps they thought someone was telling porkies.

HEALEY'S HEAVY BURDEN

Labour has had more chancellors named Healey than the party has had women leaders, though that was true before the reshuffle. However, there is another historical quirk with John Healey's appointment. Henry Conner, a reader, informs me that Healey is the second chancellor to have been educated at St Peter's, York, one of Britain's oldest schools. The first was John Aislabie (1718-1721) who oversaw the South Sea Company taking over the national debt, just before its infamous bubble burst. It transpired that Aislabie had done so after receiving £20,000 of the company's stock. He was found guilty of "most notorious, dangerous and infamous corruption" and was imprisoned in the Tower of London. And you thought that sharing a name with someone who went "cap-in-hand" to the IMF was a bad omen.

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News

The stars come out to save Jodrell Bank

Rhys Blakely Science Editor

A host of rock and pop stars have urged the prime minister to save Jodrell Bank, warning that planned funding cuts could turn the celebrated observatory into "the world's largest space relic".

Sir Brian May, the Queen guitarist who holds a doctorate in astrophysics, Johnny Marr, the former Smiths guitarist, and Jarvis Cocker, the Pulp frontman, are among more than 200 public figures who have called on Andy Burnham to intervene.

The campaign began after plans emerged to withdraw research funding, which staff say would force Jodrell Bank's giant Lovell telescope to cease operations in 2028.

An open letter argues that ending its scientific work to save £2.8 million a year would be "foolish and short-sighted". It calls Jodrell Bank "the thriving, thumping heart of space observation, research and education in the UK".

The observatory, near Macclesfield in Cheshire, is a Unesco world heritage site and one of the most recognisable landmarks in British science. The telescope, whose white collecting dish measures 76m across, has provided scientists with data on distant reaches of the universe for nearly 70 years.

Paul Morley, the music writer and producer, said Jodrell Bank had been a "huge, inspiring presence" during his childhood, widening his horizons beyond his hometown of Stockport. He described the telescope as "a work of art as well as a place of science".

John Robb, the musician, author and frontman of the punk band the Membranes, called it "one of the jewels in the crown of the north". Other signatories include Bernard Sumner, Stephen Morris, Gillian Gilbert, Phil Cunningham and Tom Chapman of New Order; Peter Hook, the band's former bassist; and Ralf Hütter, co-founder of the German electronic group Kraftwerk.

Jodrell Bank hosted the Bluedot festival from 2016 to 2023. Johnny Marr and Brian May are among the musicians who said that cutting the funding would be "foolish"

Also backing the campaign are Stuart Braithwaite, the guitarist and co-founder of Mogwai; Guy Garvey and his fellow members of Elbow; and Jez Williams, Andy Williams and Jimi Goodwin of Doves. Many of these artists played at Bluedot, a music and science festival hosted at Jodrell Bank from 2016-23.

Jodrell Bank is the headquarters of e-Merlin, a network of British radio telescopes used by thousands of researchers. It is the funding for e-Merlin that is being axed.

However, campaigners argue that without it, the Lovell telescope will stop working.

They also include Professor Brian Cox, the physicist and broadcaster, and the astronauts Tim Peake and Commander Chris Hadfield.

The letter urges ministers to find replacement funding, arguing that Jodrell Bank must remain a working observatory rather than merely a monument to Britain's scientific past.

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Nothing to see here… just thieves towing cash machine down street

Seren Hughes

Brazen thieves towed away a cash machine from outside a shop in a southwest London suburb while people passed by, apparently oblivious.

Six minutes of security camera footage show how two men, one seemingly armed with a hammer and the other driving a car, tried to force open the machine outside a Costcutter in Teddington before towing it away. A woman, several cars and a bus passed by without appearing to react to the criminals in the early hours of last Wednesday.

The two thieves, both dressed in black jumpers, grey trousers and black hats, are seen removing a tow rope from the boot of the car and fastening it to the standalone machine. The driver returns to the car and drives away, pulling the front off the cash machine.

As the car is about the drive off again, a woman is seen walking past while on her phone, apparently unaware. One of the men crouches behind the car as she passes. Once they are in the clear again, the driver speeds off, ripping the entire machine out of the ground, and the thieves depart after a parting glance at the pavement where the machine had been.

Security cameras showed the theft outside a shop in southwest London

No arrests have yet been made but police are searching for four men they believe to have been involved. Officers have also seized an abandoned vehicle in connection with the incident.

The Metropolitan Police confirmed they were investigating the theft from outside a shop on Kingston Road at about 1am on July 29. The force said: "Anyone with information is asked to contact police on 101, quoting 302/29JUL. Anonymous reports can be shared via Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111 using the same reference number."

Similar incidents have taken place in other parts of the country in recent months. In June, a cash machine was ripped out from the front of a shop in Baldock, Hertfordshire. Police believe four men and three vehicles — a JCB, a flatbed lorry and a white Audi — were involved. Hertfordshire police said no one had been arrested.

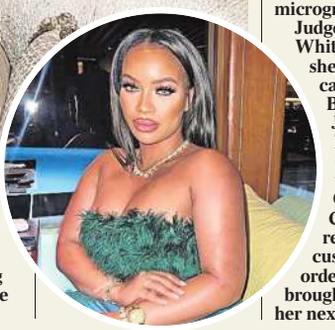
Cambridgeshire police said they were linking that incident to one in Burwell, where an ATM was ripped from an Asda Express with a stolen telehandler — a type of forklift truck with a crane-like arm — and two other vehicles. The incident remains under investigation.

Last month, a telehandler was used to steal a cash machine at an Asda supermarket in Raunds, Northamptonshire.

HAN MYUNG-GU/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES

Clear and present Charlize Theron, 50, arrives in Seoul for a press conference on Christopher Nolan's The Odyssey, in which she plays the nymph Calypso

ALDO CIARROCCHI/LNP



Klaudia Zakrzewska died six days after she was hit by a car in Argyll Street, London, far left. Gabrielle Carrington, below, was remanded in custody

X Factor star denies influencer's murder

A former *X Factor* contestant has denied murdering a social media influencer by running her over outside a Soho nightclub (Jessica Sharkey writes).

Gabrielle Carrington, 29, from Manchester, is accused of hitting Klaudia Zakrzewska, an influencer known online as Klaudiaglam, with a car near the Inca nightclub in Argyll Street, central London, at 4.30am on April 19.

The defendant was originally charged with attempted murder, but this was upgraded after Zakrzewska died from her injuries on April 25.

Anoush Chyche, a 58-year-old security guard, sustained life-changing injuries in the incident.

Carrington reached the *X Factor* live finals in 2013 with the group Miss Dynamix and has more than 360,000 followers on Instagram under the handle RielleUK.

She appeared at the Old Bailey by videolink to deny charges of murder in relation to Zakrzewska and grievous bodily harm with intent in relation to Chyche. She was not asked to enter a plea on a third charge of driving with excess alcohol in her system.

Carrington was not represented in court by a barrister and appeared to wipe tears from her eyes during the hearing.

It is alleged that Carrington arrived in Argyll Street by car and became involved in an altercation with a man as she got out of the vehicle, prompting several members of the public to intervene.

She is then accused of re-entering the vehicle and immediately mounting the pavement, striking Zakrzewska, who was "dragged forwards", then hitting Chyche, who was also on the pavement.

At a previous hearing, the prosecution described the scene as a "mêlée".

Carrington allegedly had 61 micrograms of alcohol per 100 millilitres of breath when tested after the incident, according to court charges. The legal limit for driving is 35 micrograms.

Judge Sarah Whitehouse KC said she would try the case at the Old Bailey from January. Pre-trial hearings were fixed for next week and October. Carrington was remanded in custody. The judge ordered that she be brought to court for her next hearing.

Man jailed after keeping dead mother in freezer

Jessica Sharkey Crime Correspondent

A man who kept his dead mother inside a freezer for nearly three years while continuing to collect more than £78,000 of her benefits has been jailed for more than two years.

Christopher Phillips, 60, admitted preventing the lawful and decent burial of Sylvia Phillips, 89, at their home in Porthcawl, in Bridgend, Wales.

He also pleaded guilty to two counts of fraud by failing to notify the Department for Work and Pensions and Bridgend county borough council that his mother had died in March 2023.

Phillips collected a total of £78,190.92 in state pension, pensions credit, attendance allowance, winter fuel payments, cost of living payments and housing benefit.

He was sentenced to two years and four months' imprisonment at Merthyr Tydfil crown court yesterday.

Judge Tracey Lloyd-Clarke said Phillips continued to collect his mother's prescriptions and "misled" medical professionals about her whereabouts. He repeatedly told medical staff that she did not wish to attend appointments or undergo tests.

A psychiatrist concluded that Phillips was suffering from prolonged grief disorder at the time of the offending, the court heard.

The judge added: "[The psychiatrist] records evidence of persistent longing for your mother, difficulty accepting her death, preoccupation with her, social withdrawal, and an inability to move forward with ordinary life.

"He also notes what he describes as a dependent relationship between you and your mother, together with your limited social contacts."

Phillips continued to live in the property as he had before his mother's death

Phillips left work to become a full-time carer for his mother in the months leading up to her death on March 8, 2023, the sentencing hearing was told.

Following her death, the cause of which remains unknown, he bought a chest freezer and used it to store her body inside the living room of the property.

Sylvia Phillips was found by police in February 2026 after medical practitioners who had previously treated her raised concerns about her welfare.

Her body was covered with a leopard print throw and found alongside roses and a birthday card which read "To Mum, from Christopher and Tina"— a reference to the family dog.

Lloyd-Clarke told Phillips: "Although your mother suffered the indignity of being stored in a chest freezer for three years, there were no other indignities following her death.

"Your offending is aggravated by the length of time over which you concealed your mother's death and because you had the financial advantage of continuing to receive her pension and benefits."

Ruth Smith, representing Phillips, said he had been adopted by Sylvia Phillips at the age of two and was "exceptionally close" to her. They had lived together for 50 years of his life and Phillips had been her primary care since 2008, the court heard.

She said Phillips had not used the money to pay for holidays or designer clothing, instead continuing to live in the property as he had before his mother's death.

Phillips told police he "didn't want to let her go", Smith said. "He described talking to her as if she was still alive... Sitting next to her, talking to her about television programmes, *Coronation Street*, the horse racing, just as they always did."

Smith added: "Mr Phillips was a vulnerable individual with a vulnerable mental health situation at the time of his mother's death."

Alex Orndal, for the prosecution, said Phillips had made a "deliberate and calculated decision" to continue receiving the benefit payments "without needing to return to work".

Detective Chief Inspector Claire Lamerton, of South Wales police, said: "This is an extremely sad case where Phillips concealed his own mother's death and financially profited for a significant period."

Father charged over son's death can attend funeral

Ali Mitib

A British father prosecuted by the Cypriot authorities over the death of his two-year-old son has thanked them for allowing him to return to the UK to attend his child's funeral.

The 37-year-old, who works for one of the Big Four accountancy firms, is charged with causing death by a reckless act after his son fell from the fourth floor of the King Evelthon Beach Hotel and Resort in Chlorakas on July 12, the first day of their holiday.

The father, from Essex, was arrested hours later at the five-star resort and held in prison for eight days before being released on bail. He was banned from leaving the country before his trial in Paphos, which is expected to open on September 17.

Last Friday Judge Froso Christodoulidou told Paphos district court that the attorney-general had granted the father his request to return to the UK for a month before the trial to grieve with his family and arrange his son's funeral.

Speaking outside the courtroom, the tearful father said: "I am thankful to the judge and to the authorities for letting me get home to my wife and daughter and that's all I want to do now."

Alexandros Alexandrou, defending the Briton, said that the father would be required to return by September 14 and would need to deposit bail of €10,000 and inform the authorities about where he would be staying while in the UK.

The court was told that the child fell through an open window when his father was holding him around his waist and swinging him from side to side in the corridor next to the family's room as they waited for the lift to take them to the restaurant for dinner.

The father is understood to have denied this version of events when it was put to him by police officers, insisting that he was not swinging his son.

Police said a toxicology report revealed that one or two drinks' worth of alcohol was in the man's blood. If convicted, he faces a prison sentence of up to four years.

Petros Stavrou, the family's former lawyer, made several requests during the eight days of his imprisonment for the father to be released to be with his wife when they had to inform their daughter that her brother had died. Instead, the delay meant that the father, according to reports, was forced to tell his daughter the news over FaceTime.

The family were staying at the King Evelthon hotel in Chlorakas, Cyprus

His son has been described as "a truly special, easygoing little boy who brought so much joy to everyone".

A spokesman for the family told The Times: "The family are relieved that the father has been granted temporary permission to return home, so he can be reunited with his wife and daughter and begin the heartbreaking task of organising their son's funeral.

"The family continues to ask the foreign secretary and the British government to provide whatever assistance they can, as they navigate this living nightmare."

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In the silence, you can hear society crumble
James Marriott
Page 21

Comment

Ceuta is a warning the West cannot ignore

Europe must re-engage with crisis-hit states in the Sahel, where population growth will make mass migration inevitable

William Hague

Of the roughly 60,000 people who tried to cross the border from Morocco into the Spanish city of Ceuta at the end of last week, at least 72 are reported to have died. Many of them, overwhelmingly young men and some only teenagers and children, will be the victims of believing what they could see on social media — that "Spain is open". This was inadvertently encouraged by the Spanish supreme court ruling against summary deportation for those arriving by sea, and very deliberately reinforced by smuggling gangs who took advantage of the uncertainty. Young people seeking opportunity ended up drowning in the sea.

These events have immediately become hot politics: in Spain itself, where the government is under attack for regularising the status of more than a million illegal migrants and contributing to the belief it had opened the doors; in the EU, where Italy is furious at Spain's inability to control its frontiers; and in the UK, where an embattled Nigel Farage has again declared that migrant boats can be pushed back into French waters.

The politics is largely about how to build a fortress in the UK or Europe, with higher walls and an active defence. Spain is urgently extending the sea barriers at Ceuta. But however high we build our walls, once we have to defend them we are constantly losing, with many victims like the drowned teenagers off Ceuta along the way.

That would surely be the case if the Royal Navy was towing flimsy dinghies across the busy shipping lanes of the Channel, quite apart from the likely loss of crucial French co-operation. With a successful immigration policy, there would be few teenagers in the sea because they would know beyond doubt that Spain is not open to uncontrolled migration, or small boats in the Channel because it would be clear that Britain isn't either.

The home secretary, Shabana Mahmood, is therefore working on the right lines in wanting to "change their mind about whether they get on that boat in the first place". She is making progress but needs quick deportations, sensible court decisions and effective reform of the ECHR to help her along. Andy Burnham has shown good political instincts in keeping her in place and supporting her approach. The whole political left must understand that sending a strong signal to people thousands of

> The right must realise that building a fortress will not be enough

miles away that illegal migration will not work is indispensable to avoiding tragedies at sea and steadily more extreme ideas at home.

Equally, however, everyone on the right of politics across Europe, including the UK, needs to acknowledge that building a fortress is not enough. Fortresses do not survive if they take no interest in what is happening over the horizon. Just over our horizon, a vast human crisis is developing across the Sahel region of north Africa. We are close to giving up on doing anything about it. Anyone who thinks that climate change is not a major issue, or that overseas aid is always a waste, or that building high walls will keep out all the problems, needs to study the Sahel.

While birth rates are falling across the world, they are still at their highest in parts of the Sahel. In Chad and Niger, the latest UN projections indicate a doubling of the population in the next 25 years alone. Across the region there are expected to be 250 million additional people by 2050. The median age in Sahel countries will be 23, compared with Europe's 46, and their average density will be 144 people per square kilometre to Europe's 32.

This would be a massive economic and development challenge in the best of circumstances, but unfortunately these countries face probably the worst combination of circumstances on the entire planet. Their climate is warming faster than the global average. Added to forest clearances and the exhaustion of marginal land, this is bringing an expanding desert and conflict between herders and farmers. Some nations — Mali in particular — have endured long civil wars. On the edge of the region, Sudan remains mired in the world's bloodiest conflict.

Efforts by the West to stabilise the region have not only failed but been abandoned. Two years ago, the US closed its major base in Niger after a military coup. France, historically the most active western power in the region, withdrew thousands of troops as local juntas turned against its influence. With western militaries pulling out, the Alliance of Sahel States has been formed, with Russia as its key security partner.

Wherever the West has withdrawn, the Russians have moved in. Despite heavy casualties on some occasions, they persist with establishing military bases, securing

ANADOLU/GETTY IMAGES

Thousands of migrants were urged to cross from Morocco by social media

mining concessions and expanding their geopolitical leverage. China has also moved in, with investment in oil, uranium and lithium supplies, just as western aid has been slashed.

The overall result is that we have surrendered influence, given up any control of events and largely lost visibility of what is happening. No one country or leader is to blame for that — it is an accumulation of failures and forced withdrawals over the last decade. But it would be a very serious mistake to keep the Sahel out of our sight, and consequently out of minds, over the decades to come.

The UK has perfectly sensibly reinforced our relationship with Nigeria, with a strategic partnership, as part of efforts to rebuild influence in sub-Saharan Africa. But there is no visible longer-term strategy in London, Washington or Paris. Perhaps that is not surprising, given so many other preoccupations and a short attention span in the White House. Yet some of the greatest strategic challenges are steadily taking shape across north Africa. Soon there will be hundreds of millions of young people, badly governed, with a desert expanding and their opportunities diminishing. And one day they will start moving,

> Where the West has withdrawn, Russians have moved in

in numbers never seen before and which no fortress Europe or fortress Britain can keep out.

This underlines, of course, the need for tough but effective immigration policies now. But it also shows that such policies will not be enough. In the near term, the UK and our allies need the military capabilities to act against terrorist threats forming in the Sahel and to move in to help legitimate authorities when opinion turns against Russian exploitation, as it eventually will. When that happens, aid that is now diverted to housing asylum seekers at home should be redirected to help education and the environment in Africa.

Longer-term, the West should prepare to re-engage across the Sahel, laying the ground now with diplomatic and intelligence work to be ready to help when millions of people in their twenties demand justice and opportunity in their own countries. Otherwise, the people swimming to Ceuta will not only be the tragedy of last week but the forerunners of many more tragedies to come.

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Comment

The public want leaders with nothing to hide

Keeping ministers' criminal records a secret will further corrode trust in Britain's politicians

Melanie Phillips

@MELANIELATEST

The ruling by an information tribunal that government ministers can keep any criminal convictions secret doesn't pass the smell test.

The Times wanted to know how many ministers in the Starmer government had declared criminal convictions during their vetting procedure. This was prompted by the resignation of Louise Haigh, who was forced to step down as transport secretary after it emerged that she had failed to disclose a fraud conviction from 2014.

The tribunal ruled that such information constituted criminal offence data, to which parliament had afforded special protection under data protection law. Even saying that ministers had no convictions might provide a piece in a jigsaw that identified others who did.

The reason is that revealing anyone's criminal convictions is thought to infringe upon their fundamental rights, potentially causing prejudice, reputational damage or unfair treatment. So people don't have to declare any spent convictions — which are removed from standard background checks after a certain period of time — to employers, schools or insurance companies.

There are exceptions. Employers in law enforcement or national security, for example, are legally entitled to know about both spent and unspent convictions. And even spent convictions remain recorded in confidential police databases.

So although such individuals have paid their dues to society, that doesn't mean there's no question mark about their character. A balance needs to be drawn between the requirements of privacy and the need for disclosure. That balance depends on circumstances.

In politics, transparency is an essential part of the job. For politicians, the character issue is crucial. That's why, when Andy Burnham brought Haigh back into government as chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster,

> There is incredulity over the political resurrection of Haigh and Rayner

she was stripped of her role's oversight of public sector fraud, even though her conviction was spent.

A dissenting tribunal member argued that what needed to be assessed was not a minister's criminal convictions but the extent to which they had chosen to disclose such matters. It was this candour, or lack of it, argued the dissenter, that should be subject to democratic scrutiny.

That argument was dismissed. Although there were exemptions in the public interest, said the panel, disclosure to a journalist wasn't one of them. What was being requested, it said, was public scrutiny of what was disclosed during a confidential appointments process.

Simon Madden, director of the Cabinet Office's propriety and ethics team, told the tribunal that such scrutiny could hurt that process because it depended partly upon "candid disclosures being made in circumstances where confidentiality is expected". That, however, was broadly the same argument used to explain why Starmer wasn't told about Peter Mandelson's continuing relationship with Jeffrey Epstein when the Labour peer was being vetted for the post of ambassador to America. And that went well, didn't it?

How many people trust Sir Humphrey always to assess candidates in the public interest if only he knows about the skeletons in their closet? Don't all put your hands up at once.

Such secrecy plays very badly with the public, for whom lack of integrity in politics and public life has caused a dangerous disillusionment with representative democracy itself. There has been widespread disgust and incredulity not just over the political resurrection of Haigh but also of Angela Rayner as housing secretary. She had resigned over the revelation that she hadn't paid the correct stamp duty on her second home — even though she was cleared of any offence. And people also sucked their teeth over the fact that the business secretary, Jonathan Reynolds, had falsely claimed to be a qualified solicitor.

Trust is one of the most important factors in politics. Even if people disagree with a politician's views, they need their politicians to be transparent and honest. Instead, they see dishonesty everywhere. They hear politicians lying to them non-stop, making promises they break or never intended to keep in the first place. They have watched grossly incompetent senior managers in the health service, police or Post Office, who have presided over scandals in which people have died or been wrongly jailed, refusing to resign or else departing to other cushy jobs.

People in Britain remain motivated by a keen sense of fairness and justice. They are hard-wired to do the right thing, and are appalled when politicians and other senior public servants seem to operate by different rules. The perception that politicians get away with stuff for which ordinary folk are hammered is utterly corrosive of the entire social contract.

It is often said that good people are deterred from going into politics because their lives are torn apart by intrusive public scrutiny and threats. There is certainly a toxic atmosphere that is dangerous and deplorable. But that malevolent strain in society should not be conflated with the need for integrity in public life.

To restore trust and respect, politicians need to rediscover the principle of accountability. The public need to see public figures biting the bullet for what they've done wrong by leaving public life altogether, not bouncing back as if they had done nothing bad. And transparency is key. People need to believe that what they are entitled to know about their leaders and public servants isn't being hidden from them.

They want to know that they are getting precisely what they see on the tin. They want conviction politicians. They don't want politicians with hidden convictions.

THUNDERER

Burnham risks a repeat of Brown's faith funding errors

Fiyaz Mughal

Andy Burnham's devolution promise has lacked concrete detail, though he laid out the aim during a speech in Manchester in June. "The Greater Manchester way," he said, "is based on strong partnership between all sectors: public, private, community, voluntary, academic, faith and our trade unions."

Almost two decades ago Gordon Brown set out a not-dissimilar stall, enlarging the role of "community representatives" within Whitehall as part of a devolution plan designed to solve societal ills. And faith bodies were at the centre of Brown's plans too. Some £11 million was paid out to more than 900 groups as part of the Faith Communities Capacity Building Fund between 2006 and 2008. There was also a separate three-year, £7.5 million programme to promote partnership between faith groups.

From the off, the programme suffered from weak tests of public benefit and measurable outcomes. It was built on the premise that widening engagement with faith communities could take place by engaging with the loudest voices, and drawing diverse communities into engaging with government by throwing taxpayers' money at them. If social cohesion was the aim, the reverse was the reality.

Some projects delivered little demonstrable integration or lasting social value; others brought in groups with no desire to promote national values or support work on countering extremism. At worst, groups with divisive views about the Middle East and hatred against LGBT communities and Jews used government funding to keep their organisations going.

That government's mistake was a lazy assumption that the loudest faith organisations represented the people whose religion they shared. For two decades, these divisive faith organisations have continued to bring international conflicts into the heart of British politics, with successive governments believing it's just part of "inclusion". We saw it last year, for instance, with the Maccabi Tel Aviv football debacle in Birmingham. But rather than learning lessons, Burnham appears to be playing to that divisive sectarian base. That explains why, before entering No 10, he chose to release a video saying that Labour "got it wrong" on Gaza.

Public money must come with clear civic conditions: any organisation seeking cohesion funding should demonstrate democratic governance, financial transparency, support for equality before the law and an unambiguous commitment to freedom of expression. Burnham says he wants to give power back. Fine. But power must be given to citizens, not clerical or communal gatekeepers.

Fiyaz Mughal is the founder of Faith Matters, Muslims Against Antisemitism and Tell MAMA

Giles Coren Notebook

My son says I'm telling tall stories yet again

Despite having to fill 3,000 words of The Times every week with my thoughts on this and that, I have not, as I hope you've noticed, troubled you with my opinion of Christopher Nolan's *Odyssey*. This is because I seek, in my own little way, to be surprising in my opinions, and there is nothing surprising about anyone's opinion of *The Odyssey*. Indeed, the only way to be surprising is not to have an opinion about it at all. Or at least not to tell everyone what it is. So I haven't.

But I did see the film, obviously. I went with my son, Sam, and on the way home we argued a bit about what had been done with CGI and what had been real. He thought it was mostly CGI, I thought mostly not. He said I was a credulous old boomer, I said he was a cynical wee scrote.

So I was delighted to read in The Sunday Times about the 4ft 6in stuntwoman, Devyn Dalton, who stood in for Matt Damon as Odysseus in the Laestrygonians scene, fighting 7ft actors done up as giants, obviating the need for computer trickery.

Sam, when I told him, remained sceptical ("You believe what you want to believe, grampa"), but came to me later in the garden and said: "Dad, I've worked out why you hang out with me so much: it's a Laestrygonian thing."

"Eh?" I said. "I hang out with you because you're lots of fun and I love you."

"Sure," he said. "But it's also because when you walk down the street next to me, from a distance people might think you're reasonably tall. Or at least average height."

"I am average height!" I protested. "I'm 5ft 9!"

"Yeah, whevs," said Sam, who has grown six inches this year, is currently 5ft 7 and is projected, thanks to some tallness on the distaff side, to top out at about 6ft 1. "But the joke's on you because pretty soon you're going to be making me look MASSIVE, walking down the street next to my midget father."

I dug deep for a withering riposte (we were not quite yet at the pitch where I remind him that he came out of my balls and he calls me an old pervert) but in the end just sighed and said: "If that's enough to keep you hanging out with me when you're older, Sammy, I'll take it."

"Love you, Dad," said Sam, clamping his headphones back on.

"Love you, Sam," I said.

A study in headwear

I'm writing this column in an elegant, narrow-brimmed sisal hat from Anderson & Sheppard, you will be pleased to know, because my wife bought me one for my 57th birthday last week and writing is the only thing I will allow myself to do in it.

She bought it to replace the gorgeous Borsalino she bought me for my 54th, which spent three years hanging on a nail on the wall of my study until a couple of weeks ago, when I decided to risk a trip outdoors in it for the first time, to one of Sam's out-of-town cricket matches. Obviously, I came back without the hat. So she bought me a new one because she thinks that, at my advanced age, I should start wearing a hat in the sun.

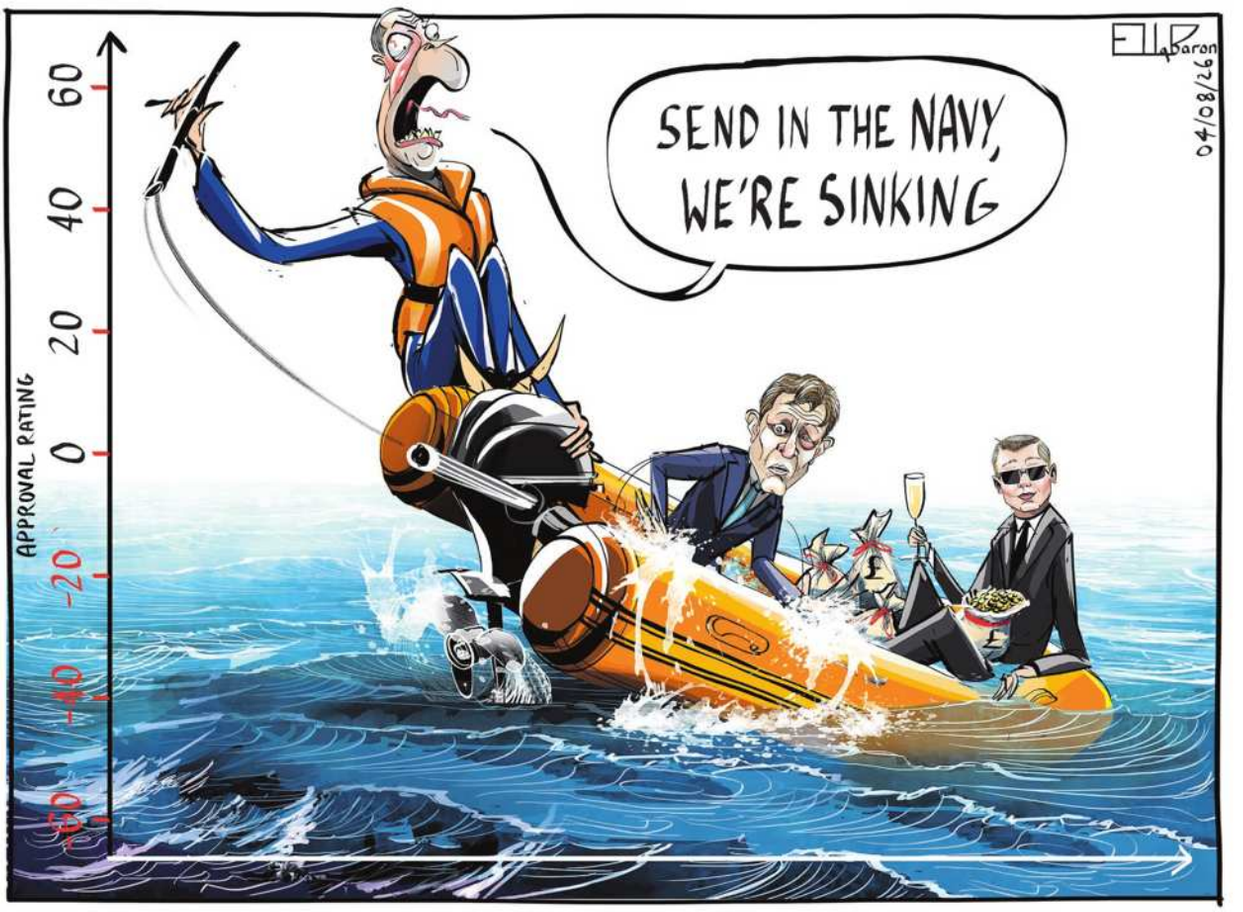
I think she thought I might even take it with me to Greece next week. But I love this hat and cannot bear to lose it. I have a full head of hair and swarthy Levantine skin; I do not need protection from the sun, in Greece or anywhere else. So it will be my writing hat. And it will stay in my study. And that's an end to it.

Budding enterprise

My neighbour told me there was an exemption to the Thames Water hosepipe ban for commercial flower growers, so I watered my garden. Wanna buy some dahlias?

Stroll before credits roll

Sam and I went to *Spider-Man: Brand New Day* on Sunday. Brilliant movie. Like, *Odyssey*-level brilliant (damn!). But a word of advice: don't sit through the interminable end credits waiting for the usual first-rate post-film Marvel stinger. Because it isn't.



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In the silence, you can hear society crumble

The art of casual conversation made us a tolerant, liberal nation but it risks being lost behind headphones and screens

James Marriott

@J_AMESMARRIOTT

In the back of an Uber the other evening, crawling through hot traffic under one of the London heatwave's lavish, coral-hued sunsets, I broke a rule of modern etiquette and fell into conversation with the driver. We spoke about his young family, the absurdly large cut of my fare kept by Uber and his previous unhappy career as a chef.

I did not glean any dazzling sociological insights from our conversation but it stands out as unusual. Most Uber journeys pass in near silence, induced either by a language barrier or perhaps by the suspicion that any attempt to initiate unwanted conversation by either party will result in a sub-five-star rating.

Amid the din of modern cities there is an eerie void of silence. A recent study reported in The Atlantic magazine found that the number of words spoken every day is declining: from 16,632 in 2005 to 11,900 in 2019. It is not hard to guess where the missing words have gone. In the branch of Leon near The Times's office I order a halloumi wrap on a screen and then wait to be handed it by a member of staff ("James?" "Er, yeah, thanks").

Tapping on to the 149, the bus driver is unreachable behind his perspex screen. In Tesco, conversation extends to some automated snark about my misuse of the bagging area. Soon London travel will be even quieter; customers will have the option of a Waymo robotaxi. Declines in conversation have prompted concern about social isolation and cognitive health (social interaction is good for your brain). But this gathering silence is also changing our society.

If there is such a thing as a "social fabric", these conversations are the small threads out of which it is woven. This sounds, I am aware, like a mere piety. But it is a historical fact. Human beings, anthropologists tell us, are a tribal species. Empathy for our families and immediate "in-group" comes naturally to us. Empathy for strangers requires conscious cultivation. The urbanisation of western countries at the end of the 18th century — and the increased social mixing it entailed — was an important force in the creation of modern liberal societies.

> The number of words being spoken every day is declining

Cities are schools of tolerance. They provide a form of what you might call "stranger exposure therapy", offering repeated small collisions with people unlike oneself. Snatched conversations in shops, taxis and restaurants represent valuable incursions across the lines of class, culture and race; each one a needle puncture to the social membranes that separate the human tribes. My interaction with my Uber driver briefly humanised a part of city life that can easily seem anonymous. Such conversations can be banal in themselves but these things add up. A complex modern society can hardly function without some shared sense of humanity on the part of its citizens.

Successful cities should be porous. But to many, London must seem an increasingly impenetrable place. How does it look, I sometimes wonder, from the perspective of a Deliveroo cyclist? Fortresses of terraced houses and brief, grudging conversations ("thanks mate") on strange doorsteps. These drivers — catering to the insatiable modern desire to eat sushi in perfect solitude — are known to their customers only as faces flashing past on streets or glimpsed briefly in lighted doorways. Technology means it is possible to live a life of hermetic silence in the midst of one of the most populous places in Europe; many are as isolated in their bedrooms or on their electric bikes as Simeon Stylites was on his desert pillar.

When considering the problems of declining social trust and increasing political polarisation we should bear in mind the value of the human interactions that are being stripped out of society in the name of efficiency.

> Delivery cyclists are known only as faces glimpsed in the door

A country that does not mingle will find itself more easily divided. One reason America is more politically polarised than Britain may be that it is more geographically divided; rich and poor and black and white are more likely to live in different suburbs. The vagaries of Britain's town planning have planted council estates in Islington and Hampstead.

I also wonder about the part mingling plays in Britain's high levels of racial tolerance and its relative success at integrating minorities. As an immigrant, you are unlikely ever to be given a comprehensive speech laying out British values. It is through trips to the shops and talking to the bus driver that the character of the society you have joined reveals itself to you.

These may seem extravagant claims for casual conversation, but comradely fraternisation between upper-class officers and working-class troops in the First World War is often cited as a factor in breaking apart the rigid prewar class hierarchy. Today, many of the very rich are more socially marooned than even their prewar ancestors, commanding a transient and anonymous servant class using mobile apps. An Edwardian gentleman exchanged many more words with his butler or chauffeur than his modern descendant does with an Uber driver or Deliveroo biker. It may be that the increased social isolation of the classes explains the growing self-interest of the rich (charitable donations have fallen during the 21st century) as well as the growing resentment of those lower down the scale.

Many modern urbanites (I do not exclude myself from the analysis) are cosmopolitans in name only; mentally and socially they are as parochial as any medieval peasant in his remote hamlet. But they are separated not by distance and poor roads but by earbuds and screens. Can you run a complex society in which nobody talks to each other?

Letters to the Editor

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Social care reform

Sir, Janice Turner is right, as is our new prime minister, about the need for a vast improvement in our care service for the elderly, involving "career progression or salary increments" for care workers ("Get ready to pay for the care we'll all need", Aug 1). Where I disagree is with her desire to "keep people out of residential homes for as long as we can". In the experience of my elderly mother, the much-trumpeted "independence" in her own home morphed into isolation and loneliness, as her own friends became fewer, and younger neighbours and friends became wary of visiting when she was tired and unwell. Her carers in her home were a lifeline and certainly deserved more than a minimum wage on a zero-hours contract. When eventually more was needed than carers' and family visits, what a revelation it was when she moved into a comfortable nursing home, where she did indeed enjoy the "lavish grounds and fine crockery". To have delightful company from other residents of the same age and stage, activities and excursions provided and, most importantly, nursing and personal care from friendly and supportive staff, was wonderful. She enjoyed it very much. It was just a pity she had delayed too long and had only a short time to enjoy it. We should not abandon this source of comfort to our elderly but rather emulate it and make more accessible, through a mix of private and state contributions.
Sylvia Gray
Edinburgh

'Minimised' opera

Sir, Nicky Spence is right that Britain has "minimised" opera (Times2, Aug 3). We have solved the "elitism" problem rather neatly, by removing classical music from mainstream schools and then complaining that only the privileged encounter it. At my London comprehensive in the 1970s we borrowed instruments free of charge, had lessons, school and borough orchestras, youth choirs performing choral classics and Gilbert and Sullivan, and subsidised visits to the English National Opera, the Royal Opera and the Royal Festival Hall. Today, many of those pathways have disappeared. Opera isn't elitist. Access to it has become so. After all, I've spent many happy afternoons singing Verdi with thousands on the football terraces — without anyone complaining it was too highbrow.
Alan Faulkner
Leamington Spa

Corrections and clarifications

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The one-size-fits-all approach to education

Sir, Lucy Powell is correct in her analysis of the education system ("Gove's legacy is a million left behind", comment, Aug 3). She rightly criticises the league table and exam-based "straitjacket" of the present syllabus but offers no hint of how she would change it. As a teacher of some 40 years' experience I suggest that we need a more rounded system to include emotional intelligence, resilience, the ability to cope with setbacks and how to be persuasive and stand up for oneself. This is what employers need, not certificates based on pen and paper exams.
Nicholas Quiney
Former director of music, Horris Hill and Solefield prep schools

Sir, Lucy Powell is disingenuous in her article in laying all the blame for high youth unemployment on Michael Gove's educational reforms. She ignores the impact that higher taxes imposed on employers by the Labour government under Sir Keir Starmer has had.
Rachel Wildblood
London SE21

Sir, Michael Gove's reforms as education secretary from 2010 to 2014 were the standout ministerial success of the Conservative years in power. They resulted in vast numbers of young people, not least from disadvantaged backgrounds, achieving life-changing academic success. But the world has moved on and the knowledge-rich education for all, which squeezed the arts, sport, character development and employment skills, is no longer tenable. Its curriculum did too little to engender responsibility and duty, and to combat an entitled and self-absorbed tendency among the young. The blisteringly quick advent of AI, affecting all aspects of education and future employment, further necessitates change to the model.

That is why The Times Education Commission four years ago advocated a British baccalaureate combining academic rigour and excellence with equally rigorous preparation for work and life in this new technological age. Policymakers would do well to study it.
Sir Anthony Seldon
Founder and deputy chair of The Times Education Commission

Sir, Your report "Toll of schooling 'straitjacket'" (Aug 3) appears to fall into the common trap of inferring from the rise in England's ranking in international league tables for maths and science between 2009 and 2023 that Michael Gove's reforms improved educational standards. They did not: Pisa scores in England in 2009 and 2022 (there was no survey in 2023; the figures published in 2023 relate to 2022) were respectively for maths 493 and 492; and for science 515 and 503. A more reasonable inference would be that Gove's reforms had no effect on achievement in these subjects.
John Britton
Emeritus professor of epidemiology; Hoveringham, Notts

Sir, I have been a lecturer and teacher for 40-plus years, and the missing piece of the jigsaw in the Michael Gove versus Lucy Powell debate on educational standards is parenting. Numerous studies have shown that when successful educational systems in countries across the world are compared the only constant is parental support. Neither Gove nor Powell recognise the real reason why so many students are underachieving and ending up as Neets. The success of the Michaela Community School in Wembley is of course because of the pursuit of academic excellence, but it also results from the support of parents who value the transformative power of learning. Politicians know this but are too concerned about short-term electoral considerations to address the real problems.
Dave Halliwell
Radcliffe on Trent, Notts

Rewilding and fire

Sir, Libby Purves (comment, Aug 3) suggests that rewilding is a factor behind the wildfires. Well, yes — and no. The monoculture of the vast Landes de Gascoigne forest has contributed to the wildfires in the Gironde and Cap Ferret. This area was originally wetland before it was drained and planted with maritime pines in the 19th century. This makes it a peculiarly manmade disaster.

Lack of management and pastoral grazing are certainly contributory factors to wildfires. These problems are particularly evident in mainland Europe, where they are associated with land abandonment. Woodland here also suffers from poor management. Rewilders might say that returning to a primeval landscape would solve this issue; wild boar would rootle in the forest understory and beavers would create wetland areas. I'm not sure I fully agree, not least because every situation is different. I would like to see plantations of conifers replaced, but not necessarily with woodland. Among the many virtues of species rich grassland is its resilience to wildfire and drought.
Nick Mann
Founder, Habitat Aid

Sir, Libby Purves' article on the role of "rewilding" in the spate of wildfires oversimplifies a complex form of land management and risks exacerbating an unnecessary culture war. There is no accepted definition of rewilding: it reflects a wide spectrum of husbandry, from taking small and unprofitable field corners out of production to large-scale conservation body reserves. Wildfires clearly pose serious questions for future land management, but to tar all rewilding projects with the same brush detracts from another crucial debate: how to regenerate our sadly depleted countryside.
Justin Milward
Ret'd chartered surveyor, Bristol

Extending royalties

Sir, I choked over my cornflakes on reading your editorial in favour of extending copyright royalties ("Neverland's Legacy", Aug 1). Copyright, like all intellectual property rights, is a bargain between creator and the state, on behalf of the wider public. In the interests of encouraging innovation and creativity the state allows a temporary monopoly, which permits the creator to monetise their creation. But the monopoly should be strictly limited, otherwise, like all monopolies, the public ends up paying over the odds. Other artists also end up unable to build on previous inventions or creations, thus reducing innovation and creativity. So it is certainly not true that extending royalties "harms no one". One might persuasively argue that copyright is already unnecessarily longer than needed to incentivise new creative works.

What you are in essence suggesting is a tax on the public to support cultural institutions. There may or may not be a case for that, but copyright term should be kept well out of it.
John Alty
CEO, UK Intellectual Property Office, 2010-16; London E9

THEY'VE GOTTA LOTTA BOTTLE

FROM THE TIMES AUGUST 4, 1926

Some interesting investigations have been carried out during the last four years by Dr HC Corry Mann, on behalf of the Medical Research Council, with regard to diets for boys during school age, and the results have now been published.

"It is striking to learn," states the preface, "that the addition of one pint of milk a day to a diet which by itself satisfied the appetite of growing boys could convert an average annual gain of weight of 3.85lb per boy into one of 6.98lb, and an annual average increase of height from 1.84in to 2.63in. This unmistakable betterment in nutrition was proved by trial to be due not to the small increase in the fuel value, nor to the extra protein supplied in the milk, but rather to more specific qualities of milk as a food."

The investigations were carried out in a colony for boys which is situated 11 miles from London, the boys being housed in a model village of 19 cottages, eight of which were chosen for the experiments.

The basic diet was given to all the boys, but there was an addition to that diet in seven of the eight cottages. In one case it was a pint of fresh milk daily per boy, value 388 calories; in another 3oz of castor sugar, 350 calories; in a third case 1¾oz — 387 calories — of the best New Zealand grass-fed butter; in two of the cottages watercress was used, the ration being ½oz to ¾oz; casein to the extent of 1oz per day was served in another; the seventh variation was 1¾oz of vegetable margarine, 379 calories. Observation was kept as regards summer and winter growth, and it was found that there was almost invariably more growth in summer.

● The visit of the Duke and Duchess of York to the Royal Welsh Eisteddfod today was a triumphant success. Sixteen thousand people crowded the gigantic pavilion which has been erected in Victoria Park, Swansea, to witness the initiation of the youngest two Bards of the Isle of Britain into the Gorsedd. Just before 11.30 the sounds of cheering announced the eagerly expected arrival. Two chairs were set before the Gorsedd banner. Then the splendidly dignified figure of Elfed, the Archdruid, ascended the platform, accompanied by Pedrog and Gwallter Dewi, the Keeper of the Sword.

THETIMES.COM/ARCHIVE

Kinder capitalism

Sir, It was good to be reminded by Tony Sewell of the wonderful Quaker tradition of combining honest business with real care for "working people" ("Let's rekindle capitalism with a conscience", Aug 3). Another example is provided by Saltaire, the textile mill and model community built by Sir Titus Salt near Bradford. Again the inspiration was Christian, and again, non-conformist – in that case, Congregationalist.

Is not a crucial difference between these social experiments and modern capitalism that the capital was amassed by the entrepreneurs themselves, and not provided by some detached financial enterprise with no direct interest in the welfare of those actually engaged in production? Cadbury is now owned by an American food conglomerate; businesses controlled by finance companies can only ultimately be concerned with financial returns.

The principal argument against nationalisation is that the state is both impersonal and too big to fail. Capitalism with the personal, human connection between employers and employed removed surely suffers from a different but similar flaw. Where the enterprise is so organised as to retain the personal concern for workers and the linked sense of pride in belonging to a genuinely socially useful organisation, "capitalism" must be the better solution.
Father Paul King
Leyburn, N Yorks

Closed churches

Sir, I too regret some of the tiny percentage of churches that have to be closed or converted to other uses (letter, Aug 1). But I am far more concerned about the number of churches that are open only on Sundays. In what sense do they "belong to the community"? No one can pop in for a prayer or take visiting friends to see their lovely church. Everything of value should be cleared out of a church, and they should open their doors.
The Rev John Craig
Lichfield, Staffs

Fibbing and truth

Sir, I have read the piece by Giles Coren ("We all fib — just stop before you reach the top", Aug 1), which referred to my late husband, a dental surgeon, and in which he stated "all dentists drive Porsches". When Giles was in prep school, I gave him a lift to Harrods where, because he was small, he was to be an elf in Santa's grotto. He was late for the lift and gave me some ludicrous reason. I asked him why he told fibs all the time and he answered "because the truth is boring". Perhaps he hasn't quite reached the top yet.
Judith Goulden
London NW3

Fizz and chips

Sir, Your article "Champagne with a side of nuggets" (Aug 1) refers to young people enjoying wine with junk food. This bit of fun is not exclusive to young people. For many years Monday at our local wine bar was the chef's night off. The proprietor encouraged customers to enjoy their wine with fish and chips, supplied by the nearby fish and chip shop. A glass or two of Veuve Clicquot proved an excellent accompaniment.
Stephen Ingram
Sheffield

Daily Universal Register

EU: Home affairs ministers hold a virtual meeting (9am BST) to discuss the migration surge in the Spanish exclave of Ceuta.
UK: Cowes Week (until Friday).

Nature notes

Once in a blue moon a bright pink grasshopper makes the news. This striking mutation is the result of a condition called erythrism, which causes an overproduction of red pigment; it's unusual but strictly speaking not rare. However, what is rare is for a grasshopper nymph with erythrism to reach adulthood: completely lacking their usual cryptic colouring and ability to disappear among grass stems, they are usually spotted and eaten by birds or amphibians long before they become full-sized. Field and meadow grasshoppers are the species most commonly affected with erythrism, and if one does achieve maturity and breeds, it can pass down the mutation, leading to more pink grasshopper nymphs when its eggs hatch the following year.
MELISSA HARRISON

Birthdays today

Barack Obama, *pictured*, US president (2009-17), 65; **Lord (James) Arbuthnot of Edrom**, Conservative MP (1987-2015), 74; **Ian Broudie**, singer-songwriter, Big in Japan and Lightning Seeds, *Three Lions* (1996), 68; **Ian Cockerill**, chief executive, Endeavour Mining (FTSE 100 mining company), 72; **Lord (Jack) Cunningham of Felling**, minister for the Cabinet Office and chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster (1998-99), 87; **Professor Symeon Dagkas**, vice-chancellor, University of Chichester, 53; **Declan Donnellan**, co-founder (1981), Cheek by Jowl theatre company, 73; **Greta Gerwig**, actress and film-maker, *Little Women* (2019), *Barbie* (2023), 43; **Professor Peter Goodfellow**, geneticist, scientific adviser, Abingworth investment group, 75; **Martin Jarvis**, actor, *Rings on their Fingers* (1978-80), 85; **Dennis Lehane**, novelist, *Gone, Baby, Gone* (1998), *Shutter Island* (2003), 61; **Lord (Steve) McCabe**, Labour MP (1997-2024, Birmingham Hall Green then Birmingham Selly Oak), 71; **Lee Mack**, comedian, *Would I Lie to You?* (since 2007), and actor, *Not Going Out* (2006-25), 58; **Jojo Moyes**, writer, *Me Before You* (2012), 57; **Luke Patience**, sailor, Olympic silver medallist (2012), 40; **Kate Silverton**, broadcaster and newsreader, now a child therapist, 56; **Mary Slaney (née Decker)**, athlete, the only runner to have held all US records from 800 to 10,000 metres, 68; **Lord (Simon) Stevens of Birmingham**, chairman, Cancer Research UK and the Maritime and Coastguard Agency, chief executive, NHS England (2014-21), 60; **The Duchess of Sussex**, 45; **Antonio Tajani**, deputy prime minister of Italy and minister of foreign affairs, 73; **Billy Bob Thornton**, actor, *Love Actually* (2003), 71; **Susan Tranter**, chairwoman, Ofqual (exams regulator in England), chief executive, EdAct (multi-academy trust), 63.

On this day

In **1997** Jeanne Calment died in France at the age of 122 years and 164 days. Officially she remains the oldest person to have lived.

The last word

"The blood of many thousands of our helpless, much injured fellow creatures is crying against us." John Newton, abolitionist and writer of *Amazing Grace*, born on this day in 1725, *The Works of the Rev John Newton* (1839)

Reform Retrenches

Nigel Farage has sought to move on from questions about gifts and donations by returning to the small boats crisis. Doing so will limit his party's reach

Last summer, Reform UK dominated the political season. Sir Keir Starmer and the other party leaders left a vacuum during parliament's summer recess, into which Nigel Farage leapt with amiable press conferences covering topics including crime. The party enjoyed a series of defections from the Conservatives, all of which gave the impression Mr Farage was defining the agenda. It helped that Reform UK was topping opinion poll after opinion poll while Labour and the Conservatives were stuck in the doldrums. Mr Farage had what American political scientists call "the big mo" — essential for any insurgent party.

This summer is different. For the first time in 15 months, Reform UK has fallen behind in some polls thanks to the energy Andy Burnham has brought to Labour. Kemi Badenoch's party may still be languishing but the Tory leader has discovered a zest and appetite for political combat that has dramatically improved her personal standing. Mr Farage, on the other hand, has seen his own ratings collapse. His news conference yesterday, the first in some weeks, was an effort to regain momentum with eye-catching ideas on stopping small boats crossing the Channel. But Mr Farage had little new of substance to say.

True, illegal migration remains one of the most pressing matters for voters. Whereas Labour and the Tories remain distrusted on the issue, Mr Farage is seen to be on the money. His new solution, to deploy the Royal Navy to stop the boats come what may, poses a raft of practical, legal and ethical questions — to none of which Reform has convincing answers. Stopping the boats requires tackling the pull factors attracting asylum seekers, namely the broken benefits system, combined with an offshore processing scheme to act as a deterrent. Reform instead believes it can force the boats back to France, whether they like it or not.

Mr Farage may not care, as long as people are talking about the topic he cares about the most. Returning to illegal migration, however, is a sign that Reform is retreating into a familiar crouch — focusing on its core voters and not the broader range of public opinion. If the party were still hopeful of winning the next election, it would be setting out a comprehensive policy platform including plans for expanding the economy, repairing the public finances, fixing welfare and building more houses. The party still hasn't bothered to appoint a foreign affairs or defence spokesperson.

The reason for this retreat, as readers will be aware, is the list of serious questions facing Mr Farage about gifts, donations, the funding of his party and himself. The latest revelation, that Mr Farage struck a comeback deal months before the 2024 election, will be examined closely by the parliamentary authorities who are already conducting an investigation. His travails have been compounded by the bizarre decision to call a by-election in his Clacton seat over this issue, which has been boycotted by the other main parties. Although he is expected to win, the contest looks unserious. Instead of speaking to the nation this summer, he is arguing with a man dressed as a bin.

Mr Farage's fitness to govern is increasingly being called into question. Respectable donors — the very thing Reform needs to grow and be taken seriously — will see his close ties to George Cottrell, a convicted fraudster, and question whether this is a party to do business with. It is inexplicable that Mr Farage continues to defend Mr Cottrell, given the revelations about his seemingly murky dealings. Reform has failed to answer questions about donations and its financing, beyond stating it has done nothing wrong. Whether it is Ukip or the Brexit Party, all of Mr Farage's past political ventures have collapsed because of an overreliance on a small clique with poor judgment. Reform UK may be going the same way, unless it can learn how to display political maturity.

Chaos in Ceuta

Migration surges should not be turned into weapons by countries in conflict

Some Moroccan invaders of Ceuta, a Spanish outpost in north Africa, were still hiding in its scrubland yesterday but many tens of thousands have now returned home, apparently exhausted by their stunt. The sudden breach of the border, amplified by social media, was plainly a political ploy by Morocco — an attempt to raise questions about the legitimacy of Spain's hold over slivers of land.

It was, however, more than that: a disturbing example of weaponising sudden mass-migration waves. Last week's incursion was almost certainly prompted by the recent visit of Pedro Sánchez, the Spanish prime minister, to Algeria. The country rejects Morocco's rule over Western Sahara and any sign that Madrid and Algiers are growing closer triggers displeasure in Rabat.

The mechanics of mobilising a public display of discontent are familiar to students of hybrid warfare. Moroccan men were tempted by more than a seaside adventure; ways could be found on to the ferries to mainland Spain, and from Spain across the border-free Schengen zone. It was a pathway that required minimal risk and promised virtual impunity. The absence of Moroccan border guards, the availability of trucks to the border, even a judgment by the Spanish supreme court in June declaring that border pushbacks did not apply on the maritime frontier — all of these created push factors common to a destabilisation gesture.

Morocco has form in deploying such tactics. In 1975, some 350,000 people were encouraged to march into Western Sahara and assert a claim to the land, even though it was ruled by Spain. The push coincided with the final illness of General Franco and the Moroccans calculated that Spanish troops would not open fire. The following year, Spain ceded the land to Morocco. Mass movements are pressure points: in 2021 Moroccan border guards let a wave of illegal immigrants enter Ceuta to punish Spain for giving a hospital bed to a Western Saharan political leader. But above all, they can be construed as political opportunities.

When Germany was overwhelmed by almost a million refugees from the Syrian civil war, the then chancellor Angela Merkel persuaded the European Union to reach deep into its pockets to pay Turkey to act as a backstop. Turkey's President Erdogan found himself not only as the saviour of a western Europe terrified of being inundated, but also a power broker in Syrian politics.

Another case of migrant flow manipulation occurred when the Belarusian dictator, facing EU sanctions for rigging an election, decided to issue simplified tourist visas for charter flights from the Middle East and Africa. The authorities shuttled thousands of would-be migrants through the forested borderlands to the under-manned frontiers of Poland, Lithuania and Latvia. The aim was to create a humanitarian crisis and ultimately coerce Brussels into lifting economic sanctions.

Controlling borders is more than a party-political slogan. It is about preventing malign actors from exploiting loopholes, whipping up crises and using the urgency of a mass incursion to force concessions while side-stepping conventional diplomacy. The Ceuta events may have given some the appearance of an exuberant coming-together of free spirits. It was anything but. The death toll, largely through drowning, stands at 72. And it was impossible to shake off the impression that would-be migrants were being used by their supposed motherland of Morocco to make a cynical point.

Keyhole Cure

Surgeons are pioneering interventions that cure birth defects in the womb

To perform a novel form of surgery on a child still in the womb is to ask a lot — both of nervously expectant parents and the ingenuity of scientists. But, in an astonishing demonstration of the sophistication of modern medicine, clinicians have shown that previously life-limiting congenital conditions can be effectively treated, and sometimes cured, before a child is even born.

Theo Savage, now a healthy six-month-old baby, was diagnosed with gastroschisis at his 20-week scan. The rare condition, which affects only one in 3,000 babies, sees the abdominal wall fail to form properly, leading the intestines to develop externally. Treating the complex condition after birth usually leads to complications, requiring months in neonatal intensive care, corrective surgeries and sometimes transplants. Luckily for Theo, surgeons are making these traumas avoidable.

Using a similar "keyhole" technique to that recently pioneered in the antenatal treatment of spina bifida, clinicians operated on Theo in utero by partially draining the fluid from the amniotic sac and carefully pushing the foetus's developing intestines back into the abdomen, which was then stitched shut. Theo was born naturally three months later, leaving hospital after four days.

Though the pioneering surgery — only the third such operation ever performed — required Theo's parents to join a clinical trial in Texas, it is expected that the procedure will soon be offered at Great Ormond Street Hospital in London. In fact, it could soon become the standard treatment for complex cases of gastroschisis. Previously unthinkable, in-utero surgery is now an area of striking medical advancement. Similar techniques could one day be used to treat lung and heart conditions, too. It is a striking achievement of modern surgery to alleviate the illnesses of young patients before they even enter the world.

World

Japan to relax ban on nuclear bombs in deterrence drive

As the anniversary of the 1945 attacks nears, opposition is dissipating, **Richard Lloyd Parry** writes from Hiroshima

Hiroshi Harada was six and waiting for a train with his parents at Hiroshima station when the bomb dropped

When elderly survivors of the atomic bomb won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2024, it felt like a vindication for victims of one of history's great horrors.

The Japan Confederation of A- and H-Bomb Sufferers Organisations, known as Nihon Hidankyo, was honoured for keeping alive the memory of Hiroshima and Nagasaki through the experience of those who lived through it, the people known as *hibakusha*.

"No nuclear weapon has been used in war in nearly 80 years," the Nobel committee said in its citation. "The extraordinary efforts of ... the *hibakusha* have contributed greatly to the establishment of the nuclear taboo."

But two short years later, and with the 81st anniversary of the strikes on Thursday, any sense of triumph has evaporated.

Nihon Hidankyo is considering whether to abolish itself as the inevitable happens and the surviving *hibakusha* grow old and pass away. More disturbing, to many of its members, the taboo for which they stood appears to be melting away too.

China and North Korea are enlarging their nuclear arsenals. The United States has abandoned, or allowed to lapse, two major nuclear arms control treaties. Shockingly, Japan, the only country to have directly experienced nuclear war, is starting to contemplate what once seemed the unthinkable: an accommodation with nuclear weapons.

The government of the prime minister, Sanae Takaichi, is openly debating a relaxation of the so-called three non-nuclear principles that have been the foundation of the country's security for nearly six decades. Last month, the country's defence minister, Shinjiro Koizumi, said that when it comes to nuclear defence, Japan "must debate and advance all policies without taboo".

To many *hibakusha*, such words contradict all that they stand for. "These people [politicians] say that exposure to the bomb is a terrible thing, but they see it as something that happened to somebody else, not something that could happen to them," said Hiroshi Harada, who was six years old when he was exposed to the first atom bomb in Hiroshima on August 6, 1945.

"I am one of those who knows the physical effect on my own body, who lived through that reality. I only wish that others could truly understand that experience."

Since its defeat in the Second World War, Japan has thrived under the protection of the US "nuclear umbrella", but successive governments have upheld the three non-nuclear principles, which were declared in 1967. These commit Japan not to possess or produce nuclear weapons, nor to allow them to be introduced into its territory.

Now, however, they are the subject of active discussion within the coalition government led by Takaichi's Liberal Democratic Party, part of a historic shift in Japan's security position.

Japan's military forces are barred under the country's constitution from anything but defensive action. But the so-called Self-Defence Forces have become increasingly active — laws have been passed to enable them to operate in support of allies outside Japanese territory.

This year, Tokyo has allowed arms makers to sell their weapons overseas for the first time. In the long term, Takaichi wants to revise the US-imposed 1947 "peace" constitution, under Article 9 of which "Japanese people forever renounce war as a sovereign right of the nation and the threat or use of force as means of settling international disputes".

"I'm 45 now, and when I was in my 20s, it was quite difficult to raise these issues, to do with Article 9 and nuclear — if you talked about them on TV, you stopped getting invited," said Fumitake Fujita , the leader of Takaichi's coalition partner, Nippon Ishin no Kai (Ishin), known as the Japan Innovation Party.

"But in recent years, missiles have been flying from North Korea every month and every week the situation in Taiwan is also very unstable. China is using the Pacific Ocean to test missiles. I think that the public's understanding and tolerance of strengthening the defence capabilities have increased significantly."

In technical terms, Japan would not take long to build a nuclear arsenal of its own. It has large stockpiles of fissile plutonium — waste from its civilian nuclear power stations — which would be sufficient to manufacture thousands of warheads. It also has a mastery of rocket technology from its civilian space programme.

Before he was prime minister, Shigeru Ishiba, Takaichi's predecessor, said that Japan could build its own bomb within a year. But no mainstream politician is arguing for that now. Instead there are moves within the government, driven by Ishin, to abolish the policy on not introducing nuclear weapons into Japan.

In practical terms, the debate over the non-nuclear principles focuses on the planned deployment of sea-launched nuclear cruise missiles on US navy submarines in 2032 — weapons that the US will want to send to Japanese military ports such as Yokosuka and Sasebo in time of crisis.

To its proponents, it is a commonsense measure to deter Japan's increasingly aggressive neighbours. But others, especially in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, believe that it puts the country at greater risk.

"We're surrounded by very aggressive potential adversaries," said Hidehiko Yuzaki, 59, former governor of Hiroshima prefecture. "It's easy to think, 'They have big hammer, we should have a big hammer too.' But if we loosen the non-nuclear principle, is that going to loosen the tension, or is it going to heighten the tension? I think it's going to increase the tension. I don't think it is the right move."

Harada, the head of the Hiroshima branch of Nihon Hidankyo, remembers fleeing from the fire which engulfed Hiroshima along streets which were literally covered in bodies.

"I saw people with their skin and flesh melted off," he said. "Some of them had their intestines spilling out. My feet slipped into their bodies and got stuck in their flesh."

But Harada is 87. The number of Nihon Hidankyo members, that which peaked at 33,000 in the 1980s, was 3,200 in the year they won the Nobel.

"We will try to maintain the impact of the hibakusha's testimonies," said Yuzaki, 59. "But it's never the same as the voice of somebody who really went through that hell, and the power of Hiroshima's message could weaken. Regardless of the movement they created and the impact they have had, the situation is getting worse. It's really ironic and very sad."

Migrants 'denied aid' to force them out of Ceuta

On Benitez beach outside Ceuta town, hundreds of young men sleep on the sand, in shallow pits like graves (Katie Gatens writes in Ceuta).

They raise their fingers to their mouths in an eating motion, and queue to refill old plastic bottles from public showers. Many suffer from severe hypothermia, shock, exhaustion and cuts.

It has been five days since the start of Ceuta's migrant crisis in which 60,000 people crossed the border from Morocco, according to Spain's interior ministry. Some 3,000 to 5,000 still remain, Ceuta's leader, Juan Jesús Vivas, estimated, but many of those who have stayed claim they have not been given food, water or shelter.

The Times understands that Ceutan residents were discouraged from

Behind the story

Set apart from Rabat's medina and its bougainvillea-clad modern quarters, the walls of the royal palace contain many of Morocco's secrets (Isambard Wilkinson writes).

Within the sprawling complex lie some of the offices of the *makhzen*, as the king's court and security and other high officials are collectively known.

Regarded as akin to "the deep state", it is the *makhzen* that holds the answer to the riddle vexing diplomats: was the Ceuta crisis orchestrated by the authorities or was it a social-media-generated stampede?

How did tens of thousands of people breach one of Europe's most heavily guarded borders? What transformed online rumours into the largest mass crossing in Ceuta's history — followed by the voluntary return of most migrants within hours?

Morocco insists the surge was driven by social-media misinformation, traffickers and misunderstanding of a recent Spanish court ruling governing the return of migrants arriving by sea.

Few dispute that rumours spread rapidly or that economic despair fuelled the exodus from northern Morocco, where youth joblessness remains high. Yet those factors alone cannot explain the scale and speed of the crossings.

Saudi faith in Trump hit by his flailing negotiations
Page 26

New bridge opens across the US-Canada divide
Page 28

BERNAT ARMANGUE/AP; PEDRO NUNES/REUTERS

Most of the thousands of migrants who arrived in Ceuta have left, but those who remain are forced to sleep on the beach and beg for food. Injuries from clashes with police and soldiers are often left untreated

‘Tone-deaf’ playlist hits bum note in reeling Spain

Spain
David Sharrock Madrid

Given the week that Spain has just experienced, it was either brave or tone-deaf of Pedro Sánchez to post a video on his Instagram profile promoting his holidays Spotify playlist.

On Friday, the prime minister was in Ceuta when some 60,000 migrants returned to Morocco after the collapse of the border on the tip of Africa. He was defending his government’s response to the crisis. Days earlier he had visited those areas damaged by Spain’s largest wildfire. In both locations he was met by jeers.

But on Saturday, he began his holidays as usual in the Mareta Palace, Costa Teguise, Lanzarote, an official residence. To get in the mood, Sánchez’s social media team released a video of him recommending “the soundtrack to my summer”.

In the video he cheerfully recommends several songs he has been listening to. “Well, anyway, I hope you like them and that they keep you company over the holidays. Have a great summer,” said the Socialist leader.

Pedro Sánchez, the Spanish prime minister, began his holiday by sharing his Spotify playlist

The playlist includes songs with names that, in the context of fires which directly affected more than 100,000 people and destroyed hundreds of houses, could be judged as in poor taste: *Gasolene* by Buck Meek and *Flashes in the Afternoon* by Stereolab. There was also *Against the Current* by Asgeir, and Paul McCartney’s *Ripples in a Pond*.

Also on the prime minister’s list are Tito Ramirez’s *Lies* and *Nightmares* by Cora Yako. *All My Friends Are So Depressed* and *Caught in a Jam* also feature, while it ends on a high note with Madonna singing *I Feel So Free*.

Critics accused Sánchez of being inappropriate when Spain was dealing with two crises. One commentator wrote that a president should “be up to the circumstances, not frivolity”.

providing aid, in the hope migrants would return to Morocco.

Spain and Morocco have agreed emergency measures to expel any of those who arrived en masse if they do not return voluntarily. The exact details of the legal procedure to remove them are unknown.

An emergency European Union meeting has been convened today in response to the crisis.

Almost a week after the surge of border crossings, the situation in Ceuta is quickly turning into a humanitarian crisis. Migrants are forced to defecate in bushes on the outskirts of town. Hundreds are still sleeping on the street.

The only migrant accommodation in the territory is at capacity and has gone into lockdown. Staff prevented those inside from passing water or food to the hundreds outside the gates, lying on the dirt, including Dfalla Sliman, 21, from Sudan. They have slept here for days. Others are from Yemen, Syria and Eritrea, and have travelled for months.

“I’m very hungry. They say everything is finished,” said Sliman, who had open wounds on his arms and legs. “And no water; they say everything is finished. I’ll wait until everyone leaves.”

In Boutique de la Prensa newsagents, Carlos Garre Barnet, 70, said the “tactic” of police was to put the city into lockdown. On Friday, “the day of the invasion of 60,000”, he opened his shop in the morning. “Everyone came in to buy water,” he said. “We understood that selling them water and food was necessary. It was logical to sell them so [they would not] go hungry.

“But the police came and said it was better if we didn’t give them anything, no food, no drink, because that’s how they left. The effect of not eating or drinking meant ... that voluntarily many left.”

Some residents of Ceuta — many of whom have Moroccan heritage — have been sympathetic to migrants. Some have gone into shops and cafés to buy food to distribute. A few shops have flouted police orders, and there are huge queues to buy provisions. When police arrive, the migrants are quickly chased away.

Ruffino Roma, 75, blames Morocco for the crisis and said the government intentionally inflamed border tensions for political leverage against Spain. The king of Morocco “uses these poor people for his own ends”, he said. “Now there are almost 100 dead in the water” and, because of the lack of aid, “surely there will be many more”, he added.

Rabat has reported 11 deaths on its side of the border, while Spain says at least 72 people died during the crossings.

Humanitarian organisations warn that they are at breaking point. Many non-governmental organisations are calling for transfers to the mainland to be quickened to give dignity to the migrants. The Red Cross has said that its team in Ceuta is overwhelmed and cannot sustain the volume of vulnerable people without government backing.

Amnesty International has urged the authorities to “ensure that adequate health and social resources are deployed”. Yesterday, a spokesperson for the International Red Cross said: “The situation in Ceuta is tragic. We are currently working closely with the authorities to organise the provision of basic humanitarian assistance for those who remain in vulnerable situations.”

Ceuta is a warning, William Hague, page 19

Pedro Sánchez, the Spanish prime minister, has avoided criticising Rabat but Juan Jesús Vivas, the head of Ceuta’s government, voiced what many Spanish officials have said privately. “It is impossible for 60,000 people to enter without the approval of the Moroccan government,” he said.

Several analysts believe Rabat’s irritation stemmed from Sánchez’s recent visit to Algeria, Morocco’s principal regional rival and, since Europe’s energy crisis, once again an important gas supplier to Spain.

An observer with dealings with the *makhzen* questioned whether poor young people travelling from cities such as Casablanca were really responding to a complex court ruling. “This is fundamentally a falling out over Algeria,” he said. “It was ill-thought through because it tells Europe that Morocco is an unreliable partner.” Morocco is a bulwark of moderate Islam and stability in a volatile region and is also a strategic ally of the US, Britain and Israel and a big trading partner for Europe.

The observer noted that the crossings coincided with the allegiance ceremony following King Mohammed’s Throne Day speech celebrating Morocco’s achievements, instead exposing the frustrations of young Moroccans and “inflicting reputational damage on the kingdom”.

Moulay Hassan, 23, the crown prince, is emerging from the king’s shadow in what Moroccan commentators have described as an “end-of-reign atmosphere”. His father has come under fire for prolonged absences and his close relationship with Abubakr Abu Azaitar, 40, a mixed martial arts champion convicted in Germany of offences, including assault.

The observer also pointed to Morocco’s close relationship with President Trump, which contrasts sharply with his fraught relationship with Sánchez, whom he has publicly criticised over Nato defence spending and the Iran war. The observer argued that Morocco may have calculated that its close ties with Washington provided diplomatic cover for a more assertive regional posture.

The king at the 2024 allegiance ceremony

José Ciro Martínez, a lecturer in politics at King’s College London, believes the behaviour of Moroccan security forces cannot be dismissed as an operational failure.

“Usually efficient and ruthless Moroccan law enforcement allowed, if not facilitated, the massive movement of Moroccans to the border with Ceuta,” he said. “There is no possible way this occurs without government knowledge and authorisation.”

According to officials cited by El País, Spanish intelligence believes the exodus was an act of opportunism. Rumours triggered the movement, but Moroccan authorities allegedly chose not to stop it, later exploiting the crisis to reinforce their long-standing claims to Ceuta and Melilla.

A senior Spanish official, however, speaking to The Times, described the crossings as “a hybrid operation” that was “instigated and permitted” by the Moroccan regime.

Riccardo Fabiani, of the International Crisis Group, said Europe’s reliance on neighbouring states to manage migration had created a profound vulnerability. “If migration is the only thing you care about,” he said, “then you become vulnerable on migration.”

Ukrainian drone kills 7 Russian beachgoers

At least seven holidaymakers, including three children, were killed in southern Russia on Monday when a suspected Ukrainian drone slammed into a busy beach (Marc Bennetts writes).

Social media videos showed the drone flying over the beach close to Gelendzhik, a resort town in the Black Sea region, as air defence guns opened fire. It then veered towards the shore before exploding in a ball of flame.

More than 40 people were also injured, nine of them in a serious condition, officials said. Two children were among the injured.

Veniamin Kondratyev, the regional governor, alleged Ukraine had deliberately targeted the beach, while Maria Zakharova, the Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman, accused Ukraine's western allies of aiding terrorism. Kyiv has not commented.

Ukrainian and Russian anti-war Telegram channels said the drone's trajectory could have been altered by air defence fire or electronic jamming systems. There was no clear evidence in the video that the drone had been struck.

Witnesses said there had been no air raid sirens before the explosion. "I'm taking my family and leaving this place; all of this happened right in front of the children — my child is having a nervous breakdown," one told 93.ru, a Russian website.

It is unclear what Ukraine had been targeting. Civilian casualties are rising in Russia as both sides escalate long-range strikes.

Russia said a girl, 13, had been killed and two other children injured in a Ukrainian drone attack in the Belgorod region on Sunday. On Thursday, a North Korean missile fired by Russia killed a couple and seven of their children in Radushne.

Footage on social media shows the drone, circled, falling from the sky after being fired upon before exploding on the shore

Saudi faith in Trump shaken by his flailing negotiation attempts

Saudi Arabia

Samer Al-Atrush
Middle East Correspondent

President Trump called off strikes on Iran at the urging of Saudi Arabia, which increasingly doubts the president's credibility after he plunged the region into a seemingly unwinnable conflict.

"I think one of the casualties of this war is credibility," said Aziz Alghashian, a prominent Saudi researcher. "We keep hearing, time and time again, of a ceasefire, then it just breaks. Negotiations and discussions become traps."

As if to underscore the point, Iran denied Trump's assertion that it would hold talks yesterday, something the president claimed had persuaded him to call off planned strikes.

He reacted on Truth Social, calling the Iranian regime "unbelievably duplicitous" and vowing to continue the US blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

He later told reporters in the Oval Office that talks with Tehran were "on right now" and would yield benefits.

"They're going to go quickly ... We're talking about having the Strait open completely, literally by tomorrow," he said. "That's phase one. Then there's the denuclearisation of Iran and that'll be the second phase, and that will take a little while."

Having previously threatened Iran with the "biggest attack since World War Two," he said: "I want to give them every last chance before decapitation."

The president's abrupt reversal in postponing the strikes came as a surprise to Israel and, along with Iran's denial of negotiations, strengthened belief in the region that the US president cannot be trusted. Saudi Arabia had intervened in recent days with a visit by its defence minister, Prince Khalid bin Salman, to Washington in which he pushed for de-escalation, followed by a phone call to Trump from his brother, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

President Trump and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman met in Washington last November. Mohammed was against the Iran war but once it had started urged Trump to finish the job

Mohammed initially opposed the war, but later urged Trump to finish the job. The kingdom grew disenchanted with the conflict, which seemed to radicalise the Iranian regime and disrupt the region's energy trade and revenue.

In Israel, which continues to call for more military action against Iran, the media reported that its leaders first learnt of the change in plan from a post by Trump on Truth Social on Sunday.

To both his critics and allies in the region, Trump appears to be flailing for a solution to the war he launched in February in the hope of a quick victory. Iran's regime has shown no sign that it will compromise on control over the strait, which remains mostly shut. "There is frustration," Alghashian said, a sentiment echoed by people familiar with the Saudi government's thinking.

Underlining Trump's narrow options, a senior US military officer sent an email to analysts soliciting "creative and unconventional ways to pressure and punish Iran", CNN reported.

"Trump's options right now are between an unwinnable war and unpalatable deal," said Ali Vaez, who heads the Iran project at the International Crisis Group. "This has been the case for a while and I imagine it's going to remain the case for the foreseeable future."

Although Iran denied scheduled talks with the US, it has cited progress in its negotiations with Oman on how to manage the strait. Oman has proposed voluntary fees for maintenance and navigation services, but the precise mechanism remains unclear.

If a deal to Tehran's satisfaction is reached, it is likely to return to Trump's Memorandum of Understanding, which it signed in June before the ceasefire unravelled.

The talks are being supported by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Qatar, along with Oman. The Gulf countries have begun to unite around the view that Iran's regime will not be toppled, and that they must reach a rapprochement with its new leadership.

"It's not clear that a limited and timebound military escalation will shift Tehran's calculus or sufficiently degrade its military capabilities such that it cannot threaten traffic through the strait or threaten Gulf Co-operation Council critical and energy infrastructure," said Farzan Sabet, an Iran expert at the Geneva Graduate Institute.

While Riyadh still views him as a favourable president, Trump's inconsistency on Iran as well as on a nuclear deal with the kingdom has dented trust.

In July, Trump announced an agreement to help Saudi Arabia build a nuclear reactor and possibly enrich uranium. After criticism in Washington, he added a new condition that made it contingent on Saudi Arabia establishing diplomatic ties with Israel. The move took Riyadh by surprise. Officials said it had not been part of the deal.

Suu Kyi seen in public for first time in over five years

Myanmar

Richard Spencer

A Red Cross representative has been allowed to meet the Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, the first outsider to see her in person since she was ousted from power and detained more than five years ago.

The junta in Myanmar released two photographs of Suu Kyi with Arnaud de Baecque, who is the official representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to the country.

A government spokeswoman said the meeting took place in the regime's modern capital, Naypyidaw.

Two more photos showed Suu Kyi in what appears to be the house where she has been detained under house arrest since April, and with a birthday cake dated June 19, the day she turned 81.

The photographs were welcomed by her son, Kim Aris, who has had no direct contact with her since her arrest in February 2021 and has been campaigning for evidence that she is alive and in good health. "This may be a first step but it must not be the last," he said.

This detention is Suu Kyi's second period of extended house arrest in her long history of activism and politics.

Her democratically elected government was overthrown in a military coup in 2021, reigniting a long-running civil war on several fronts. She was sentenced to 33 years in prison on charges ranging from treason to corruption, though this was reduced and in April she was returned to house arrest.

Aung San Suu Kyi meeting Arnaud de Baecque of the ICRC in Naypyidaw

In the new photos, she is wearing traditional dress and seems well and smiling as she shakes hands with de Baecque. The ICRC confirmed that a meeting had taken place. "This included the opportunity to speak with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in private," it said. Daw, meaning "aunt", is an honorific often given to women as a sign of respect. "Detention visits provide people deprived of liberty with the opportunity to exchange news with their families."

The Myanmar government, often hermit-like, has begun a spate of diplomatic initiatives this year as it seeks to stabilise its rule. Parts of the country have fallen under the sway of a variety of rebel groups, while others have, with the connivance of the authorities, descended into semi-autonomous criminal compounds.

The junta has diplomatic support from China but it is concerned about the growing lawlessness on its border, and has raided the scam centres to free thousands of Chinese citizens working in them.

Women turn their backs on topless sunbathing over voyeurism fears

Spain
Isambard Wilkinson Madrid

Seventy years ago, Benidorm mayor Pedro Zaragoza is said to have ridden a Vespa to Madrid to persuade Franco to tolerate bikinis on beaches in the face of church opposition — a story that came to symbolise Spain's embrace of modern tourism.

Today, the debate has come full circle, as concerns about privacy, digital voyeurism and body image have led many women to think twice about going topless. For weeks, Spanish newspapers and social media have been debating whether topless sunbathing is disappearing from the country's beaches and, if so, why. A report by El Pais concluded that the picture is more complex than the headlines suggest. There is no definitive evidence — but there is widespread perception that fewer women, especially younger ones, are choosing to go topless.

The latest available figures, from a YouGov survey last year, found that 37 per cent of Spanish women said they often sunbathed topless, 13 per cent occasionally, 9 per cent only once or twice, while 40 per cent said they never did. That represents a decline from an Ifop survey in 2017, when Spain topped eight countries surveyed, as 49 per cent said they went topless — double the international average of 22 per cent.

Later Ifop studies in 2021 and 2023 suggested the practice had continued to decline across Europe and is now largely associated with women over 40.

Among the 117 women who shared their experiences with the newspaper, more than half believed there were fewer women going topless today. As one respondent, María, 44, put it: "It's a vicious circle. There are fewer women doing it because they feel less safe, and when others see fewer women doing it, they feel less inclined to do it."

Much of the discussion has centred on fears of being secretly photographed or filmed and having images shared online without consent. Although the Spanish interior ministry says there is no evidence of a problem on beaches, El Pais received a dozen accounts from women who said they had been photographed sunbathing between 2008 and 2025, with images circulated online or among friends and colleagues.

Experts say the broader phenomenon of "sexpreading" — non-consensual sharing of sexualised images — has become an increasing concern in recent years. Yet digital privacy is only part of the explanation. Women interviewed described feeling more self-conscious because of unrealistic beauty standards, and of disapproving looks from other beachgoers.

INA FASSBENDER/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Seeing spots **Visitors in an immersive installation titled Infinity Mirrored Room during the last day of a five-month retrospective of the career of the Japanese artist Yayoi Kusama at the Museum Ludwig in Cologne, Germany, on Sunday. The exhibition has broken the museum's attendance record with more than 470,000 visitors**

'Toxic' office of PM under investigation

Charles Bremner

Three deaths and an attempted suicide have caused prosecutors to investigate alleged bullying in the administration of the French prime minister.

The Paris prosecutor's office confirmed that it had opened a criminal "psychological harassment" inquiry after a complaint from a staff member who said she had attempted to take her own life. It followed two deaths by suicide this year, as well as a suspicious death in an office lavatory.

Some 3,500 civil servants staff the administration, based at the Hôtel de Matignon, the prime ministerial mansion on Paris's Left Bank.

They report to Sébastien Lecornu, a centrist appointed by President Macron last September as France's fifth prime minister since January 2024.

"Laura" told prosecutors that she had attempted to take her life under the stress of a toxic workplace. She was restrained by a commuter just as she was about to throw herself under a train in the spring, her lawyer, Christelle Mazza, said.

In its investigation, France Inter said the complaint to the prosecutors was "highly unusual — if not unprecedented — within a department where discretion is paramount".

Pro-Putin 'propagandist' to be deported

France
Charles Bremner Paris

A Russian broadcaster whose pro-Kremlin views have become a fixture of French television has been declared a threat to national security and ordered to leave the country.

Xenia Fedorova, 45, a former head of the French branch of Russia's RT propaganda network, has made prominent appearances in media outlets owned by the right-wing billionaire Vincent Bolloré. The decision to deport her has divided opinion, prompted right-wing claims of censorship and stirred embarrassment in the populist National Rally.

Ministers ordered her expulsion last week amid unease over her appearances on the popular CNews television channel, Europe 1 radio and Le Journal du Dimanche newspaper in the run-up to the presidential election in April. Her French bank accounts were frozen on treasury orders at the weekend.

Fedorova says that she is no "demonic Bond girl"

Yesterday, a Paris judge rejected a request from Fedorova for an emergency injunction lifting the deportation order and house arrest. Her lawyer said she would make further appeals to block it.

The intelligence services had been warning the government that Fedorova was a Kremlin agent of influence in its disinformation war against France and European interests, according to Le Monde newspaper.

Fedorova, who has described herself as a protégée of Bolloré, presents President Putin's lines without contradiction from other presenters. Russia's "special military operation" in Ukraine since 2022 was provoked by Nato allies, including President Macron, and the country was run by gangsters who were prolonging the conflict for profit, she said.

In a newspaper column last month, she attacked Macron's decision to put Ukraine at the heart of the Bastille Day military parade. The French people had "never been consulted" on their country's involvement on Kyiv's side, she said.

Macron has repeatedly described Fedorova, who was trained by Margarita Simonyan, the head of RT, as a Kremlin propagandist. The government shut down RT's French outlet along with the rest of the EU in 2022, but it had until now resisted calls, including from its own MPs, for her expulsion.

Laurent Nuñez, the interior minister, said Fedorova was a relay for Russian disinformation and that her activities "attack the fundamental interests of the nation". Jean-Noël Barrot, the foreign minister, said the Bolloré media empire was "spoon-feeding Putin's narrative to France".

Bolloré's outlets, along with right-wing commentators, have deplored the order as a denial of free speech and human rights. There has been silence from Marine Le Pen, the distant leader in polls for the presidential contest, who has recently tempered her pro-Russia sympathies.

A spokesman for her National Rally gave qualified support to the expulsion yet several of its politicians have attacked it. Thierry Mariani, an influential Rally MEP, said the government "might finally succeed in silencing one of the few dissenting voices in the French press that did not repeat the authorised official narrative on the conflict in Ukraine". Philippe de Villiers, a former cabinet minister who is now a hard nationalist, called the expulsion order illegal.

Fedorova, who heard about her expulsion while on holiday outside France, has cast herself as a victim. "We are witnessing an entirely new form of political pressure with a single objective: the censorship of opinions that do not conform to the official narrative," she said.

Her lawyer said on Monday that she would only return to Paris, where she has lived since 2017, if the expulsion order was lifted. Fedorova claimed the government and media had colluded to smear her by spreading claims that she has cast a spell over Bolloré, whose Fayard publishing house produced her memoirs last year.

"I am depicted as some sinister, demonic James Bond girl who came to conquer France. It's a cliché that stems from my background," Fedorova said.

Defiant diva

A glamorous conductor known for her ties with the Italian prime minister, Giorgia Meloni, has caused controversy by accepting an invitation to perform in Russia (James Imam writes).

Beatrice Venezi, who once starred in a shampoo advert, told the agency Adnkronos that she would debut in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk with a production of Verdi's *La traviata* in the autumn.

Defending her decision, she said: "I am a free person, I am a free artist; I go where I see fit."

She was appointed music director of Venice's La Fenice opera house last September, but was dismissed seven months later prior to taking up the post. Her dismissal came after strikes by the orchestra due to complaints she lacked experience and had been selected because of her ties with Meloni. Venezi said she had been "systematically slandered, defamed, insulted and bullied".

World

New bridge across a widening divide

The border is easier to cross, but the US and Canada are drifting apart, **George Grylls** writes from Ontario

CARLOS OSORIO/REUTERS; NIC ANTAYA FOR THE TIMES

Overlooking the US-Canada border, the regulars at Jake's Olde Towne Tavern in Windsor, Ontario, will have to toast their new bridge with something other than their favourite tipple, a cherry-flavoured Kentucky bourbon called Red Stag.

"We're not serving any American beers or any bourbons," says Phil "Jake" Jacobs, 72, the owner. "Sometimes you gotta take a hard stance. With all the tariffs, it's our only recourse."

The opening of the Gordie Howe International Bridge was meant to be a celebratory moment. Instead, the $4.5 billion suspension bridge, connecting the cities of Detroit, in Michigan, and Windsor, in Ontario, has become a symbol of the break-up between the neighbours.

The Gordie Howe bridge connects Detroit with Windsor, Ontario, home to Phil Jacobs, below, owner of Jake's tavern where US drinks are off the menu

Canadian officials staged an inauguration ceremony without their US counterparts last week, saying it would be "inappropriate" to celebrate with their neighbours given President Trump's repeated threats to annex the country.

Days before, Trump had announced an extra 50 per cent tariff on Canadian goods, adding to existing tariffs. He is considering further punishment after an Ontario wildfire caused hazy skies in US cities. "We're going to put a big tariff on Canada because of the smoke," he said.

The bridge, named after the Canadian ice hockey player Gordie Howe, was designed to carry almost $300 billion in annual trade. Yet it has opened at a time when Ontario has removed all US alcohol from its shelves. Doug Ford, the province's premier, has opted for a more aggressive response to Trump's trade war than Mark Carney's appeal for talks.

Some irate Canadians want their prime minister to stiffen his resolve.

"We've got our guys fighting a fire in Colorado. Some of them died over there. But they're gonna tariff us because we can't control this wildfire?" says Jody Ganney, 55, a bartender at Jake's, referring to the recent death of a helicopter pilot from British Columbia. She now recommends a Canadian spirit to customers requesting Red Stag.

When the Gordie Howe bridge was first proposed two decades ago, few could have predicted that cross-border traffic would decline by roughly a quarter.

The bridge offers a panorama of the border. Far below, American anglers cast for catfish in front of Detroit's blast furnaces and Canada geese waddle along the Windsor riverbank.

At one stage this year, relations between the US and Canada were so bad that it was not clear if the bridge would ever be completed.

In February Trump received a call from Howard Lutnick, the US commerce secretary, who had just spoken to Matthew Moroun, the owner of a rival Detroit bridge.

The Moroun family has held a near-monopoly on Detroit river crossings for decades as the owners of the Ambassador Bridge and a month before Lutnick's call, Matthew Moroun had donated $1 million to Maga Inc, a pro-Trump political action committee. The Moroun family had been pursuing legal action for more than a decade to block the construction of its competitor bridge.

After the call with Lutnick, Trump waded into the row on Truth Social. He said the new bridge was emblematic of how Canada had "treated the United States very unfairly for decades" and claimed — incorrectly — it had been made with "virtually no US content". Under the terms of a 2012 agreement, the bridge was made with only US and Canadian iron and steel. "I will not allow this bridge to open until the United States is fully compensated for everything we have given them," Trump said.

In the end, Matthew Moroun's lobbying was in vain and the Gordie Howe bridge opened on July 27.

Ottawa financed the construction of the bridge and was set to recoup these costs by collecting tolls from drivers, before splitting the subsequent revenue with Michigan.

Instead, Carney was forced to rebut accusations he "caved" in after it was announced that Canada would split the net toll revenues for 15 years after the opening, paying half into a US-controlled fund. "We changed the terms of the Deal so that the United States of America now gets 50 per cent of the Profit," Trump boasted.

Carney is facing a political backlash for what has been considered a meek response to Trump's mockery.

Canada accounts for more than 60 per cent of US crude oil imports and the most aggressive option for Carney would involve squeezing America's energy supply further at a time of rising fuel prices for motorists. Carney has said he does not "see the value" in using Canada's energy exports as a cudgel in trade talks.

Carney appears to think that Trump's attacks are largely performative and the latest round of tariffs include a levy on ice hockey sticks. This has been a source of much mirth to Canadian players because, these days, they all use the carbon fibre sticks made in China, Pakistan or Vietnam, rather than the traditional wooden versions made in Canada.

Graham Hossack, 57, who emigrated with his family when he was three years old from Aberdeen to Ontario, says: "Kids won't even look at them."

Like other Canadians, he is changing his spending habits. "We have so much business between us," he says. "Like everybody, you try to support Canadian businesses in these times. If you can keep every dollar in Canada it makes our country more robust."

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Boyfriend of Nova victim takes own life at her grave

Israel The boyfriend of a woman murdered at Nova music festival on October 7, 2023, has taken his own life at her grave, Israeli media have reported. Bar Asraf, 30, shot himself at the resting place of Liron Barda, a 26-year-old bartender at the festival. She was killed by Hamas while trying to help wounded victims. Asraf recently told his mother he was struggling without Barda, and was reported to have said that "there's no one who can replace her, no one to cheer me up".

Rhine falls to record low levels as heatwave bites

Germany The river Rhine is recording record low levels as a consequence of the latest heatwave, as low as 22cm in Düsseldorf and 67cm in Cologne. Local politicians are calling for a national taskforce to ensure the continuation of industrial transport, which relies heavily on the Rhine. The shallow water means cargo vessels are often able to sail only about 20 per cent loaded, forcing shipments to be spread among multiple vessels and creating extra expense.

Polish man makes history with 160km Baltic swim

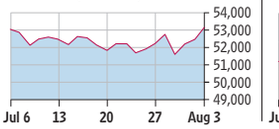
Poland A Polish swimmer has become the first person to swim across the Baltic Sea between Sweden and Poland. Bartlomiej Kubkowski covered the 160km (100 miles) in 56 hours. He set off from Kaseberga in Sweden on Friday and arrived at the Polish town of Dziwnow on Sunday. It was his fifth attempt to complete the crossing. He was not allowed to touch his support vessel. His journey was one of the longest-ever continuous, unassisted open-water swims.

Business

WORLD MARKETS (Change on the day)

FTSE 100
10,857.70 (-10.35) ▼

Dow Jones
53,178.41 (+693.38) ▲



COMMODITIES

Gold
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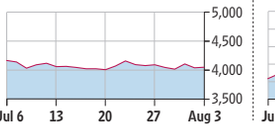
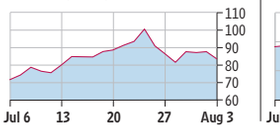


Brent crude (6pm)
$83.53 (-4.24) ▼



CURRENCIES

£/$
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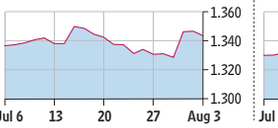

£/€
€1.1672 (-0.0016) ▼

Landlord with no homes still paying fund manager £167k a month

Tom Howard Property Correspondent

Home Reit, the scandal-hit "landlord for the homeless", has sold its final four properties. However, its fund manager is still getting paid £167,000 a month.

The sales of the remaining houses at recent auctions mark the conclusion of a wind-down process that began two years ago and brings to an end Home Reit's six years as an operating business.

Management has started placing some of the group's subsidiaries into voluntary liquidation and informed HM Revenue & Customs that given it has no properties left in its portfolio, it has exited the real estate investment trust (Reit) scheme.

Home Reit is now effectively a shell company, albeit one still facing a number of investigations and lawsuits, including from its own shareholders.

AEW, the fund manager that runs the business, will continue to receive its £167,000-a-month fee for the next three months, although this will drop to £120,000 a month in November and then to £42,000 a month in February.

Home Reit floated on the London Stock Exchange in 2020 and over the next couple of years tapped investors for £850 million to build a portfolio that at one stage comprised 2,500 houses. These were supposedly let to "robust tenants", including homelessness charities and housing associations.

In 2022, the short-seller Viceroy Research cast doubt on the reliability of those tenants and questioned the prices paid for some of the properties. Despite the landlord's initial rebuttals, those concerns proved well-founded. It subsequently emerged that Home Reit was receiving barely any rent and a revaluation by an external consultancy of its properties in 2023 established that they were worth, on average, less than half what had been paid for them.

In January this year, the Serious Fraud Office (SFO) arrested six people as part of its investigation into suspected bribery and fraud.

In July 2024, a year after AEW had replaced the original fund manager Alvarium, it was decided that the best way forward was for Home Reit to be wound down, with all of the properties to be sold off and any remaining cash to be returned to long-suffering investors.

Last month the company told investors that it had about £108 million of cash and was due to receive another tranche of £25 million next April from Patron Capital, the private equity fund that bought 706 of Home Reit's buildings for £123 million this year.

However, it is not yet clear when, or even if, Home Reit shareholders will ever see any of that money. In an update

Continued on page 30

AstraZeneca shares fall on merger talks

Analysts question benefits of deal with rival

Martin Strydom, Emma Powell
Alex Ralph

Almost £18 billion was wiped off the value of AstraZeneca as investors delivered a frosty response to reports that it was exploring a deal to combine with a US rival, Bristol Myers Squibb, to create one of the world's biggest pharmaceutical groups.

The FTSE 100 group, which is London's second-largest company, is said to have held discussions with the New Jersey-based rival in recent months. Shares in AstraZeneca closed almost 9 per cent lower in London — their largest daily fall since April last year — while Bristol shares closed marginally higher, up $0.16, or 0.2 per cent, at $65.47 in New York last night.

AstraZeneca has a market valuation of about £178 billion, while Bristol is worth about $132 billion.

AstraZeneca said: "We never comment on rumours. We have had that policy through multiple rumours over many years." Bristol did not respond to requests for comment.

The cool response from AstraZeneca shareholders came as some analysts questioned the strategic benefits of such a combination for the London-listed group, whose share price has more than quadrupled during Sir Pascal Soriot's 14-year tenure as CEO.

John Murphy, senior pharma analyst at Bloomberg Intelligence, said the talks appeared to make "limited strategic sense for Astra" and "would likely be subject to antitrust scrutiny, given the overlaps of their oncology portfolios.

"While both are focused on developing promising pipelines, history suggests such megamergers hamper pipeline progress."

A deal by Soriot would extend the British drugmaker's pivot towards the US market. The company upgraded its New York listing in June, in a blow to the London stock market.

The company has invested tens of billions of dollars in US manufacturing since President Trump started his second term. It aims to generate half of its targeted $80 billion in annual revenue by 2030 from the US market.

Second-quarter results last week showed that strong demand for cancer and rare-disease drugs continues to drive AstraZeneca's growth. Cancer treatments accounted for about $25 billion in 2025 sales, nearly half of the total, followed by cardiovascular, renal and metabolism treatments worth about $12 billion.

Oncology drugs accounted for more than 40 per cent of Bristol's overall sales in the first six months of 2026 and the two companies' cancer immunotherapies directly compete. The company has been doing smaller deals to gain new drugs as it faces declining sales of older medicines, some of which will soon face generic competition.

However, while a combination would create an "even bigger oncology powerhouse", analysts at Jefferies said, it was not clear how it would "obviously benefit" AstraZeneca shareholders, given the company already has a faster-growing drugs pipeline.

The talks were first reported by the Financial Times, which said they "could yield a deal in the near future but may be delayed or fall apart".

Markets baffled, pages 30-31

DARREN GERRISH/GETTY IMAGES

Physical Dua Lipa, the first female artist to earn five Brit Award nominations in a year, is to launch an entry-price point skincare line with Augustinus Bader

Atari's back catalogue revives sales

Chris Dorrell

One of the pioneers of the video games industry reported its highest sales in a decade as its strategy of reviving classic franchises helped to pull the once bankrupt company back into profit.

Atari, the company behind classic games like *Pong* and *Asteroids* as well as the Atari 2600 console, reported that revenue grew 66 per cent year-on-year to €56 million. Revenue was lifted by the acquisition of Thunderful, a Swedish games group, last August.

It reported a profit of €100,000 in the year to March, after a net loss of €12.6 million the previous year.

Wade Rosen, chief executive, said: "This year marks another major growth year for Atari, despite a challenging industry. Our games-focused strategy, initiated three years ago, has proven successful as Atari is reaching operational profitability for the first time in several years."

Founded in California in 1972, Atari helped push video games into the mainstream in the 1970s and early 1980s. It was one of the fastest-growing companies in US history, before competition and market saturation led to a sector-wide crash in 1983.

The company was broken up in 1984 and bought by Infogrames Entertainment, the French publisher, in 2001, which later adopted the Atari name.

The Paris-based company pivoted to a "retro-focused" growth strategy under Rosen's leadership in 2023.

Atari has mined its back catalogue and bought gaming studios, as well as the intellectual property rights to individual games.

Last year Atari acquired five Ubisoft titles, including *Cold Fear* and *Child of Eden*, and released 30 games, including archival collections and updated versions of *Mortal Kombat*, *Rollercoaster Tycoon* and *Rayman*.

In June this year Atari bought Hipster Whale, the studio behind the *Crossy Road* franchise, for $29.3 million.

Need to know

1 Almost £18 billion was wiped off the value of AstraZeneca as investors delivered a frosty response to reports that it was exploring a deal to combine with a US rival, Bristol Myers Squibb, to create one of the world's biggest pharmaceutical groups. Page 29

2 Home Reit, the scandal-hit "landlord for the homeless", has sold its final four properties. However, its fund manager is still getting paid £167,000 a month. Page 29

3 One of the pioneers of the video games industry reported its highest sales in a decade as its strategy of reviving classic franchises helped to pull the once bankrupt company back into profit. Atari, which was behind classic games like *Pong* and *Asteroids*, reported that revenue grew 66 per cent year-on-year to €56 million. Page 29

4 Amazon's stock market value topped $3 trillion yesterday after a sharp rally on the news of strong earnings figures and signs that the artificial intelligence boom is driving fresh demand for its cloud-computing services — the company's main profit engine.

5 Shell has struck a deal to sell its European onshore wind and solar business to France's TotalEnergies as it continues its retreat from renewables. Page 32

6 A London-based semiconductor start-up founded by a 25-year-old British entrepreneur has been valued at $3.3 billion after it raised funds to develop the latest generation of chips. Olix was founded by James Dacombe, who dropped out of school at 16 and also established CoMind, a brain-monitoring company, when he was just 17. Page 35

7 New Look has appointed a chief executive from within its leadership team as the struggling fashion retailer looks to build on the turnaround efforts under its outgoing boss. Lynda Petherick, currently New Look's chief operating officer, will succeed Helen Connolly, who is leaving to become chief executive of George at Asda. Page 36

"Currency wars are often a harbinger for trade wars that can morph into real wars

Mehreen Khan, page 33

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AstraZeneca deal baffles both markets and analysts

Tie-up with Bristol Myers Squibb may raise US profile but would be a headache for R&D, **James Hurley** writes

The prospect of a $400 billion merger between AstraZeneca and Bristol Myers Squibb prompted alarm in some quarters over the UK's second-most valuable company apparently tilting further towards the United States.

The mood among analysts was more one of confusion. Jefferies was "perplexed", UBS was "surprised", Bank of America found the reports of the potential deal "odd".

A tie-up between the British drugs group and its US rival would create a giant business with potentially the industry's broadest cancer drugs portfolio, with overlaps in other areas including cardiovascular and lung health.

Cancer drugs accounted for half of AstraZeneca's 2025 sales and for more than 40 per cent of overall revenues at Bristol in the first six months of 2026. The two companies' cancer immunotherapies compete directly.

In the context of a giant merger, these similarities could be good news when it comes to cost-savings and cash generation, but problematic in terms of clearing competition regulation. Any deal would also prompt concerns about the impact on research and development, which Sir Pascal Soriot has put at the heart of his successful 12-year turnaround of the FTSE 100 business.

Patent "cliff edges" — the term for loss of revenue and profits when patent protection on a key drug expires — loom large over the purported talks.

AstraZeneca faces the loss of exclusivity on three blockbuster cancer drugs, Tagrisso, Calquence and Imfinzi, in the early 2030s while Bristol Myers Squibb is heading into its own patent cliffs, for the blood thinner Eliquis and cancer drug Opdivo, which may stall its growth in the coming years.

A merger would result in a significant short-term boost to AstraZeneca's profitability, but the effect may wane as Bristol's patent cliff edge kicks in.

The problem, as UBS analysts pointed out, is the deal risks being of declining benefit just as AstraZeneca is facing profit pressure during patent expiry, expected to be between 2031 and 2033.

Could a merger add to AstraZeneca's pipeline of promising drugs? Greater scale could, in theory, mean more muscle to throw at developing new treatments. However, pharmaceutical industry merger deals have a tendency to damage innovation and AstraZeneca already has a good drugs pipeline.

UBS said the problem with such mergers was that "research and development productivity appeared to fall further during the merger period as employees understandably focused on job risks during integration". As such, they have fallen out of favour, with "bolt-on" acquisitions of key innovation targets the preferred approach and the acquired operations partially ringfenced so that R&D is not stalled.

The last major deal involving AstraZeneca was a $39 billion purchase of Alexion, a rare-diseases specialist, six years ago, a transaction put together remotely through video calls during Covid lockdowns. That acquisition was the largest since the group was created in 1999 through the merger of Astra of Sweden and the British group Zeneca.

Despite its size, UBS said the Alexion acquisition was a successful example of a "bolt-on approach" as it added a new specialism "rather than overlapping operations".

Analysts at Bank of America warned that few giant pharma mergers "have been perceived as successful given the frequently cited disruption to research and development, and [they] have usually come from a position of weakness".

It added: "We think investors could perceive a potential merger as a signal that AstraZeneca lacks confidence in its own pipeline — which would be odd, in our opinion — and a need to bolster growth [after 2030]."

"Odd" is a nod to the 12-year turnaround of the drugs pipeline under Soriot, which has seen AstraZeneca gain a reputation as a premium R&D franchise that rarely posts negative trial results, although sentiment has been mixed after Wainua, a nerve disease

A damp squibb?

Where they make their money

AstraZeneca	2025 revenue
Oncology	$25.6bn (+44%)
Bio Pharmaceuticals	$23bn (+39%)
Rare diseases	$9.1bn (+16%)
Other	$1bn (+2%)
Total	**$58.7bn**

Bristol Myers Squibb	
Growth (Oncology, Immunology)	$26.4bn (+55%)
Legacy (Cardiovascular, Haematology)	$21.8bn (45%)
Total	**$48.2bn**

Middle East holds back Marriott

Jessica Newman

The hotel giant behind the Grosvenor House on London's Park Lane has provided further evidence of the challenges facing the sector, revealing that the Middle East conflict has slowed construction of new hotels in the region.

Marriott International said it expects growth in net rooms for 2026 to be at the low end of its 4.5 per cent to 5 per cent guidance range, citing construction delays in the Middle East.

The travel industry's outlook over the rest of the year remains clouded as the prolonged hostilities between the US and Iran threatens consumer spending, while reduced airline operations in the Middle East have curbed travel demand across the region.

Jen Mason, Marriott's finance chief, said she expects the conflict to continue to affect business in the region, although to a lesser extent than previously expected. Shares in the company that generated $7.07 billion in revenues for the three months to the end of June, were down 6.7 per cent in afternoon trading in New York.

Marriott's global revenue per available room (revpar), a key industry metric, rose 3.4 per cent in the second quarter, with the company registering revpar growth of 5 per cent in the US and Canada. Room revenue in Marriott's luxury segments, including brands such as Ritz-Carlton and Sheraton, increased 9.1 per cent as affluent travellers shrugged off economic uncertainties.

However, revpar in Europe, the Middle East and Africa declined by more than 5 per cent as a strong performance increase in Europe was outweighed by a 43 per cent drop in the Middle East.

Anthony Capuano, Marriott's chief executive, said that as a result of the company's "outperformance in the second quarter and [with] strong, broad-based demand generally expected to continue", management are now guiding to global revpar growth of between 3 and 3.5 per cent this year, up from a previous forecast of between 2 and 3 per cent.

Marriott, based in Maryland, USA, has a portfolio of nearly 10,000 hotels across 148 countries, having added about 17,900 net rooms globally during the quarter.

The trimming of the company's room growth forecasts follows on from competitors flagging similar headwinds. Last week, Hyatt lowered its full-year forecasts for net rooms growth to 6 per cent, compared with its previous forecast of 6 to 7 per cent, as it warned that it continued to expect "hotel revenues in the Middle East to remain significantly below last year".

Meanwhile, Hilton's room revenue from its Middle East and Africa region dropped 29.5 per cent in the second quarter, reflecting dampened travel to the region, creating uncertainty over the second half of the year.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

Home Reit fund manager's fee

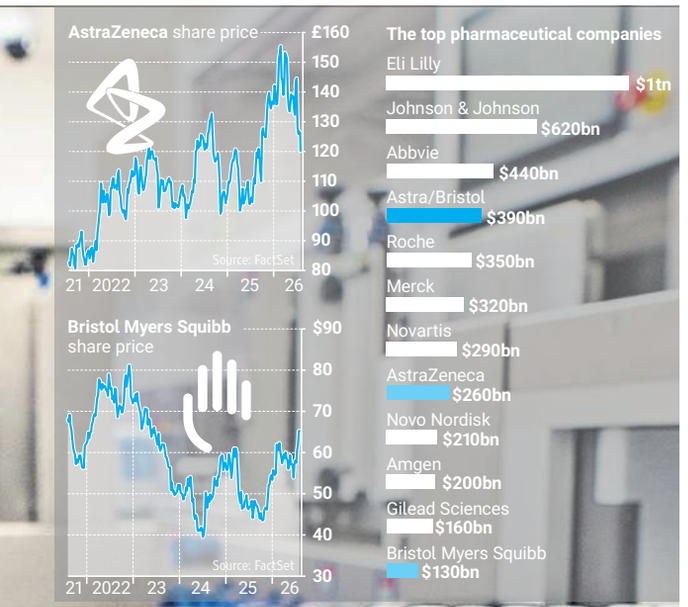
last month, the company said it was spending the best part of £1 million on "non-property operating expenses" each month. This includes AEW's fees, but was "primarily legal fees".

The Financial Conduct Authority has been looking into Home Reit since the start of 2024 and its investigation remains "ongoing".

There is also the SFO investigation and a potentially costly lawsuit brought by the commercial litigation firm Harcus Parker on behalf of scores of shareholders who have accused the company of providing "false, untrue and/or misleading" information. A pre-action letter of claim was sent in 2023, but no formal proceedings have been issued.

Home Reit has always vowed to defend itself against the allegations.

Michael O'Donnell, chairman of Home Reit, said selling the remaining houses and liquidating subsidiaries was "a further important milestone" that would move the company "closer to returning any capital to shareholders".



drug, unexpectedly failed a pivotal heart-disease trial last month.

The transformation of its pipeline, balance sheet and share price has been propelled by the blockbuster success of innovative cancer drugs. AstraZeneca is on track to reach its $80 billion annual revenue target by 2040.

"Given the historic challenges of megadeals in pharma causing R&D productivity to stagnate, and the apparent breadth and depth of the in-house AstraZeneca pipeline, we are surprised," UBS analysts said.

Similarly, analysts from Jefferies said they were a "bit perplexed", given "the strength of AstraZeneca's growth and innovation profile".

They added: "Maybe more cash generation would allow for more R&D. But if there is one company that doesn't need financial engineering, it's AstraZeneca in our view." If it really is in need of more pipeline drug assets, it is likely they can be sourced without the headaches inherent in such a huge merger, Jefferies said, including from China.

What about pricing? A deal for Bristol Myers Squibb may look attractive because it is cheap, relatively speaking. According to Bloomberg, Astra trades at about 15 times its forecast earnings, compared to ten times for Bristol.

AstraZeneca's logic for the deal, which could come in the form of buying its US rival using cash and shares, given the larger market valuation of the British business, may boil down to a combination of valuation and cost savings.

However, Jefferies said: "Using what would be a lot of premium equity to acquire a low [price-to-earnings] business would seem drastic to us."

AstraZeneca may benefit from the cash generation of Bristol's legacy assets, but Jefferies questioned "how this would obviously benefit AstraZeneca shareholders who'd see their growth diluted".

Regulation is another hurdle. Given the overlap of treatment areas, sell-offs may be required, given the size of the stranglehold the combined entity would have on the cancer drug market.

UBS said: "We would expect a detailed competition review to look deep into both companies' pipelines and require significant divestiture of any overlapping programmes. "

There is also a political angle. "AstraZeneca would effectively be a UK-based acquirer of one of America's large pharmas at a time when US policymakers are focused on domestic manufacturing and strategic industries," Jefferies noted.

A tie-up might well be a way to continue expanding AstraZeneca's US footprint, but "it would likely need to be navigated to reduce frictions".

Given all these concerns, UBS speculated about whether there had been an overreaction to the reported talks, wondering whether they might actually be about a "more-focused partnership between the two companies on a single product or franchise", a tactic AstraZeneca has used successfully before.

All that said, Soriot has proved people wrong before. The Alexion deal, intended to boost cashflow and margins, was unpopular with investors at first, as was raising funds for a partnership with Japan's Daiichi Sankyo Co in 2019.

AstraZeneca's market value had dropped nearly 9 per cent by yesterday's close in response to the speculation about the tie-up. Bank of America said it expected AstraZeneca shares to continue to come under pressure until details of the deal emerge.

Perhaps Soriot can see a rationale yet to be realised by the market.

This pharma tie-up makes no sense

BUSINESS COMMENTARY *Graham Ruddick*

It's only a week since Sir Pascal Soriot was talking about the need to operate at "Chinese speed" in order to stay ahead. So perhaps we should give the AstraZeneca boss the benefit of the doubt on a deal that makes no sense to mere mortals.

Shares in AstraZeneca fell 9 per cent yesterday following a report in the Financial Times that the company has held talks about a tie-up with US rival Bristol Myers Squibb. This could create a drug company worth $400 billion.

There was no official comment from either company on the deal. Behind the scenes, there was the usual "we don't comment on rumours" stuff. But given the market reaction, it would have been understandable to steer us all away from the idea if nothing was going on. That didn't happen.

The sharp fall in AstraZeneca's share price sends a couple of clear messages about any mega deal.

First, there is an obvious concern about the cost — both financially and in terms of the time and resources it would take to bring two giant businesses together.

Second, there is a deeper concern about whether AstraZeneca is entirely confident in its pipeline of new drugs.

As analysts at UBS noted on Monday, these pharma mega-mergers only tend to happen when two companies are looking to cut costs because they are facing a hit to their revenues from blockbuster drugs coming off patent. And we know that AstraZeneca and Bristol Myers Squibb face patent cliffs.

For AstraZeneca, this is from 2031 when drugs such as Imfinzi, Tagrisso and Calquence will contend with competition from cheap generic rivals. For Bristol Myers Squibb, it is from 2028 when drugs with sales of $30 billion will be threatened, such as Eliquis and Opdivo.

It's easy to see where AstraZeneca and Bristol could offset this financial hit by making savings if they came together. They overlap in oncology, for instance. Savings could be made in research and development, sales and other administrative areas.

But why would AstraZeneca want to bother with any cost-cutting when Soriot has championed the company's innovation? He has been steadfast in his belief that AstraZeneca's scientists will come up with new inventions to offset the patent cliff that the company faces.

Soriot has said he is "absolutely confident" of hitting AstraZeneca's target of $80 billion sales by 2030 and he talked up the company's prospects beyond that.

Yet look at what happened in early July. AstraZeneca suffered a big setback when it announced that its potential blockbuster drug Wainua had failed a late-stage trial.

AstraZeneca had been targeting as much as $5 billion a year in sales from Wainua. But the drug did not meet its primary target of reducing cardiovascular deaths and recurring heart problems. Shares in the company tumbled following that announcement.

We can see the news on Wainua in a different light now. It showed the fickleness and unpredictability of innovation. "Biology is not mathematics. It's not as predictable," Soriot said last week. "People have got used to us delivering at a high success rate. But we have to accept we will fail from time to time."

Perhaps AstraZeneca wants its post-2030 world to be more predictable. And balance sheets are more predictable than biology. Cutting costs from a combined AstraZeneca-Bristol Myers Squibb gives it something to talk to investors about.

But AstraZeneca's success in the past decade has been built on more than this. It has set a benchmark for innovation in the UK.

Some have suggested the deal is actually all about Soriot's desire to conquer America and complete AstraZeneca's transformation into a transatlantic giant. But the logic for doing that by buying Bristol Myers Squibb makes little sense either. For all the grumbles about the UK undervaluing great businesses, AstraZeneca trades at a higher price-to-earnings ratio than Bristol Myers Squibb: 15 times 2027 forecast earnings for AstraZeneca compared to 11 times for Bristol.

Whichever way you look at it, this deal is a damp squib.

Capital punishment

SpaceX is heading back to earth with something as terrestrial as a quarterly earnings update. Analysts expect those results to show quarterly revenues of $6.9 billion, helped by the Starlink satellite business, and a pre-tax loss of $1.6 billion.

However, a key number to watch is capital expenditure. Analysts expect capex of $14.1 billion for the three months to June, according to Reuters. Some $10 billion of that will be on AI.

Any movement on that number either way could determine the market reaction. In recent weeks, Wall Street has shown a willingness to punish companies for increasing capital expenditure with little or nothing to show for it.

The world has changed significantly since SpaceX's IPO on June 12. The shares surged that day from $135 to more than $160. Elon Musk, the founder, became the world's first trillionaire.

Since then, however, Musk has been pointing out on social media that he is a former trillionaire. SpaceX shares closed at $114.53 yesterday ahead of the company's results, well below its float price.

Worse could follow this week if Wall Street worries that its capital expenditure is out of control.

Meta shares tumbled last week after the company nudged up its forecast capital expenditure for 2026 from $125 billion-$145 billion to $130 billion-$145 billion. Microsoft, by contrast, said its capex would be lower than expected: $175 billion versus a forecast $190 billion. The result? $450 billion was added to the value of Microsoft in one day — the most for any business on record.

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Amazon tops $3trn on cloud services

Charlotte Bend

Amazon's stock market value topped $3 trillion yesterday after a sharp rally on the news of strong earnings figures and signs that the artificial intelligence boom is driving fresh demand for its cloud-computing services — the company's main profit engine.

The Nasdaq constituent is the fifth company to reach the milestone after Apple, Microsoft, Nvidia and Alphabet, which owns Google. Last week, the shares recorded the biggest one-day jump since April 2012 after the group delivered its strongest cloud growth in more than four years and raised its annual capital spending forecast.

Shares in the company, which closed up $13.45, or 5 per cent, at $285.02 last night in New York, have risen 23.05 per cent since the start of the year and enjoyed their best 72-hour stretch since the three days ending October 27, 2009, when they rose 30.6 per cent.

Share price

"Amazon is probably the most emblematic of the economy right now. It's a consumer story and it's an AI story," Mark Hackett, chief market strategist at Nationwide, the US financial services group, said.

"The big scepticism coming into earnings season was if they [hyperscalers] were turning the spigot down on spending on AI. We did not get that from Amazon and Microsoft and that has unleashed a much broader all-clear for the market."

Amazon still has some way to go to catch Apple at $4.5 trillion and which briefly topped $5 trillion last week, or Nvidia, the chipmaker, at $5 trillion. Microsoft is valued at $3.6 billion.

Andy Jassy, chief executive, described Amazon Web Services, which grew net sales by 36.7 per cent in the second quarter compared with a year earlier, as "booming" in a statement last week. The online retailer was co-founded by Jeff Bezos, who remains the largest shareholder with a near 9 per cent stake.

Jassy said: "Our AI and chips businesses each eclipsed run rates of more than $25 billion.

"In stores, we again set record delivery speeds for Prime members in the first half of the year — over 40 per cent more items delivered same-day or overnight, with grocery and everyday essentials growing meaningfully faster than the rest of the business."

Business

Shell continues green energy retreat

Emily Gosden Energy Editor

RICHARD BOUHET/GETTY IMAGES

Shell has struck a deal to sell its European onshore wind and solar business to France's TotalEnergies as it continues its retreat from renewable energy.

The FTSE 100 oil and gas group did not disclose a value for the deal, which it said covered about 500 megawatts (MW) of capacity in operation and development across the UK, Italy, the Netherlands and Spain.

The portfolio also includes some of its battery storage assets and a 3.5 gigawatt (GW) pipeline of early stage projects for future development.

UK assets being sold include the 19MW Iddenshall solar park in Cheshire. A spokesman said Shell was retaining its interest in the giant Cottam 600MW solar and battery storage project, which spans the Lincolnshire-Nottinghamshire border. It has a share charge over the project, according to planning filings.

The sale is the latest in a string of moves to offload renewables, including a $1.8 billion deal last month to sell its 5GW Indian solar and wind business.

As of the end of June, Shell had about 4.5GW of renewable power generation in operation globally and about 1.7GW in development.

Following the TotalEnergies deal, the two main tranches of renewable generation left in its portfolio are offshore wind in the Netherlands and solar farms in the US through its Savion subsidiary. It is reported to be preparing for a sale of its offshore wind business.

In the UK, Shell sold its stake in the MarramWind floating offshore project in November to its partner Scottish Power and returned the licence for the CampionWind project to the Crown Estate.

Machteld de Haan, president of Shell's downstream and renewables business, said: "This agreement reflects Shell's ... focus on actively managing and high-grading its power portfolio.

"We are recycling capital and prioritising areas where we have differentiated capabilities and can create the most value ... including through asset-backed power trading and customer-focused energy solutions."

Shell is Europe's biggest oil and gas group, with 85,000 workers in 70 countries and operations from oil and gas exploration to fuel retailing. It produces the equivalent of about 2.5 million barrels of oil a day and is the world's biggest independent trader of liquefied natural gas (LNG).

Last week it reported its second-highest quarterly profit on record, with adjusted earnings of almost $10 billion for the three months to June, thanks to high and volatile oil and gas prices due to the US war on Iran.

Wael Sawan, Shell's chief executive since the start of 2023, has abandoned many of the renewable and power sector investments made under his predecessor, Ben van Beurden. Early moves included selling Shell's UK household energy supply business to Octopus.

Shell boss Wael Sawan, left, has agreed a deal to add to the renewables collection at TotalEnergies as the company focuses on oil and gas

During an investor day in March last year, Sawan said it was "pivoting away from assets with infrastructure returns and more towards assets that support our trading strategies".

"This means we will prioritise investments in flexible generation, such as gas-fired power plants, large-scale batteries and digital technologies," he said.

"These are critical for our trading teams to manage risk and capture value in a system that is expected to be more unpredictable as the share of supply from renewables grows."

While Shell and BP have both largely reversed their push into renewables, TotalEnergies continues to build a significant power generation business.

The French company said its European renewables operation now comprised nearly 10GW of gross installed capacity or capacity under construction and 27GW under development.

Alongside the Shell deal, TotalEnergies said it was selling a 50 per cent stake in a "largely developed" 1.2GW renewables asset portfolio to "an insurance account managed by KKR" for an enterprise value of €1.8 billion.

Oil price drops as Trump teases peace

Tom Howard

Oil prices fell by more than $5 a barrel yesterday after President Trump's decision to call off fresh attacks on Iran in the hope of striking a quick peace deal.

The price of a barrel of Brent crude, the global benchmark, retreated by $6.51, or 7.3 per cent, to $83.32, having been above $100 a barrel two weeks ago.

Global oil prices have been volatile ever since the US launched its first strike at the end of February, leading to the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping artery through which about 20 per cent of the world's oil and liquefied natural gas is carried.

On Sunday night, Trump said the latest round of talks between the US and Iran was due to start on Monday evening. He said Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's crown prince, as well as US partners such as the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, had urged him not to carry out further strikes. "We were all set to go," Trump said. "The reason they asked is they think there's a deal. There's a deal on Hormuz and there will be a deal on the nuclear."

His teasing of a deal, and the drop in oil prices, lowered expectations that central banks might have to soon raise interest rates to curb inflation. In response, government bond yields, which move inversely to bond prices, fell yesterday. The yield on a two-year UK gilt dropped to 4.32 per cent, having been above 4.42 per cent on Friday.

Iran's foreign ministry denied it was negotiating with the US but confirmed there had been talks with Oman to reach "an understanding over a path to ensure the security of shipping passage through the Strait of Hormuz".

Trump has repeatedly claimed that a negotiated end to the conflict is near, only for tit-for-tat strikes to resume shortly after. The UK Maritime Trade Operations Centre has reported three tanker attacks in the strait since Saturday. In response, fewer commercial ships have been passing through.

According to data from Kpler, the trade analytics group, there were 51 vessel crossings through the strait between July 30 and August 2, which was 28 per cent fewer than in the previous four days.

"We are still not comfortable that we are out of the woods," Mohit Kumar, chief European strategist at Jefferies, said. "We do not think we will get an all-out war, but we see the uneasy truce scenario dragging on for a while. We are not looking for oil to go above $100, but we also struggle to see Brent much below the $75-$80 level."

Further weighing on oil prices yesterday was a post by Trump on his Truth Social account, in which he told oil companies to "get your consumer (retail!) Oil Prices DOWN, NOW!"

Ruhr deal: Gelsenkirchen refinery sold off by BP

Emily Gosden

BP has completed the sale of its Gelsenkirchen refinery in Germany as it seeks to cut costs and raise cash.

The FTSE 100 energy company is aiming to divest $20 billion of assets by the end of next year, a target set by former chief executive Murray Auchincloss as part of a strategic "reset" at the start of last year. BP announced in March that it had struck a deal to sell Gelsenkirchen to Klesch Group, a refinery business based in Geneva, Switzerland, for an undisclosed sum.

BP said the Gelsenkirchen sale will help to reduce its cost base by $1 billion.

The energy giant has announced or completed more than $11 billion of asset sales towards its divestment target, including about $6 billion from its December deal to sell a majority stake in its Castrol lubricants business.

Last week, Meg O'Neill, the chief executive, announced that it was commencing a sale process for its UK North Sea business, which analysts estimate could fetch $2.6 billion. She said she believed the business would "be better positioned as part of another company".

Analysts at Jefferies have questioned whether it will ultimately sell the whole business, rather than retaining a stake in a joint venture or "satellite" model, such as it pioneered with its Norwegian business a decade ago. That created the successful Aker BP, in which BP retains a minority shareholding.

BP is to report second-quarter earnings today and analysts are forecasting a surge in profits to $5.1 billion, up from just over $2 billion last year.

Mehreen Khan

Currency wars lead to real ones, so China must be handled carefully

In the past two years, the world economy has been gripped by trade wars and real wars. History suggests that the precursor for both is often a phase of rampant currency wars, which are back in the news.

Currency wars — or manipulation of exchange rates to gain advantage over trading partners — are often a harbinger for trade wars that can morph into real wars. Currency wars are so dangerous to global financial stability that the entire basis of our postwar Bretton Woods system was designed to stop countries from engaging in the beggar-thy-neighbour devaluations of the 1930s. The chaotic collapse of the inter-war gold standard and the breakdown of international monetary co-operation contributed to the world's second global conflict in two decades.

The ability to manage currency disputes is a good test of global co-ordination. That's why the Bretton Woods institutions or the 1980s Plaza Accord loom so large in our recent political economy. In both cases, countries sat down and agreed to manage their exchange rates to prevent trade wars from turning into real wars. In the most recent decade, one could argue that the first exchange of fire in the US-China rivalry began in 2019, when the Trump administration officially labelled Beijing as a currency manipulator. These things rarely end well.

Currency wars are back in the headlines for two reasons: a perennial dispute about China's exchange rate, and a more recent concern about the sliding value of Japan's yen.

Let's take Japan first. For the past four years, Japanese authorities have tried in vain to prop up their weakening currency, which has been stuck at 40-year lows against the dollar. Last week, the intervention took a more serious turn when Washington stepped in to strengthen the yen. It is the first time the US has intervened to support the yen, outside the emergency 2011 tsunami, since the 1998 Asian financial crisis.

A weakening currency can cause problems for a domestic economy. It raises the cost of imports for consumers, reducing households' purchasing power, and stoking inflation. Japan relies on imports for almost all its energy needs and a bulk of its food supply. The yen's depreciation has become a bigger headache as Japan is finally generating inflation after four decades of stagnant prices.

KEYSTONE-FRANCE/GETTY IMAGES

Bretton Woods in 1945 was designed to prevent a repeat of the 1930s chaos

The US intervention shows that a weakening yen is not just a Japanese problem, but an American one. Why? Washington has not revealed its motives beyond support for one of its steadfast allies and a belief that the yen is undervalued, given economic fundamentals. But the motives for US action are multiple. The first is the concern that Japan's hyper-competitive exchange rate, which makes its exports cheaper to the rest of the world, is a threat to US exporters. It was the anxiety of American farmers that forced Ronald Reagan into a managed devaluation of the "super dollar' at the Plaza Hotel in 1985.

The other driver behind US support for Japan is about the risk that solo action from Tokyo could pose to the US government's borrowing costs. Japan is the largest foreign holder of US Treasury bonds. Japanese authorities support the yen by selling foreign currency assets, including US debt. This was the case during its interventions in 2022, 2024 and in April this year, according to Goldman Sachs. Selling Treasuries at scale risks raising US government borrowing costs. Scott Bessent, US Treasury secretary, has offered Japan the use of a repossession facility that will allow it to support the yen without offloading US debt. Bessent has also promised further intervention to stop traders betting against the yen.

The rest of Japan's G7 allies are unlikely to help like the US. But the currency they do have in their crosshairs is China's. Germany has joined France and the European Central Bank in calling out Beijing for having an artificially low exchange rate that is damaging European industry and contributing to a record $1.2 trillion trade surplus. Fredrich Merz, German chancellor, has said the renminbi is 25-30 per cent undervalued against the euro and the dollar. He wants China's trade partners and the Communist Party to fix the imbalance.

Germany knows all too well about currency manipulation. It rode the wave of an undervalued euro to become an exporting juggernaut from the 2000s. But Merz's comments still represent a significant shift in China hawkishness from the US to Europe over the past year. Berlin has joined Paris in calling China's export model an existential threat to its domestic car, chemical and green energy industries. Trump, having launched an ill-fated trade war against China last year, is far less bellicose.

Does the currency matter in the debate about how to rebalance global trade? Brad Setser at the Council on Foreign Relations says the extent of China's financial doping is far worse than institutions like the International Monetary Fund have captured. He argues the renminbi is trading at the same levels against the dollar as it was in 2008. Merz's 30 per cent undervalued figure comes from Setser's calculations. "There is a clear correlation between periods of weakness in China's currency, and periods of Chinese export out-performance," he says.

Those arguing that it doesn't matter so much are two of the IMF's former chief economists and the incoming chief economist at the Bank of International Settlements. Writing in The Economist, the trio argue the undervalued renminbi is not the cause of China's record surplus, and fixing it won't make much of a dent in the surplus. It is an odd argument from a group of serious economists, because it is one about politics more than the mechanics of trade.

Exchange rates do matter. But telling a country to strengthen or weaken their currency is a highly sensitive, often inflammatory demand. That's why the IMF has refrained from calling out China and instead urged more sensible policy changes like increasing the country's social safety net to jump-start consumer spending. Even in the world of free floating exchange rates, currencies remain a prized part of economic sovereignty. That's why joining the euro was a non-starter in the UK. It's why calling out China's undervalued renminbi will fall on deaf ears.

Mehreen Khan is Economics Editor of The Times

UK factory output in July hit by Iran conflict

Charlotte Bend

British manufacturing activity expanded for a ninth straight month in July but at the slowest pace in four months, pointing to a renewed impact from the Iran war towards the end of last month.

The S&P Global Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) for the UK manufacturing sector fell to 51.9 last month from 52.5 in June, in contrast to an earlier provisional or flash reading of 52.8, which was the third-highest reading of the past four years. The 50-point threshold separates growth from contraction.

"The month-on-month fall was due to a steep reduction in stocks of purchases, slower jobs growth and an easing in the rate of increase in vendor lead times," S&P Global said.

The survey, which is compiled from responses by purchasing managers at about 650 manufacturers, found that companies expect to increase output over the coming year with stronger market conditions and new product launches. However, the respondents also cited downside risks to growth, which include global trade tensions, tax rises, and regulatory changes.

Rob Dobson, director of economic indices at S&P Global Market Intelligence, said: "Better resource availability and supplier reliability will hopefully provide further respite to squeezed supply chains in the months ahead, though developments in the Middle East will be key to supply and price developments in the coming weeks.

"These positive price and demand trends were not fully reflected in the labour market, with the upturn in manufacturing hirings grinding to a near halt in July, but the first rise in backlogs of work in over four years suggests employment could pick up in the coming months."

Medium and large companies saw particularly strong production, offset slightly by weakness among smaller businesses. New orders grew for an eighth consecutive month, with order growth from North America, the EU, mainland China, India and South Korea helping to boost exports.

Matt Swannell, chief economic adviser to the Item Club, an economic forecasting group, said: "The loss in momentum came despite upturns in production and orders, with the survey reporting that global trade tensions, tax rises, and regulatory changes were some of the factors dragging down business sentiment."

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Business

‘I think everyone should be paranoid

One of the world’s top cybersecurity bosses says firms need to build their defences, writes **Louisa Clarence-Smith**

BJ Jenkins is scared. The president of Palo Alto Networks, the world’s largest publicly traded cybersecurity firm, has a front row seat observing the rapidly intensifying cyberthreats facing businesses and governments in the age of advanced artificial intelligence.

“The thing that scares me the most now is these models are so smart; they can take lower-level vulnerabilities, things that you probably would not think are a real threat, and they can chain them together and create an exploit out of that,” he said.

Last week Anthropic said its Claude AI models had breached three organisations while it was testing cyber capabilities, a week after OpenAI disclosed a similar incident.

“I’m very concerned for small and mid-sized businesses [that don’t have the resources to invest in advanced cybersecurity],” Jenkins said. “But even for large Fortune 100, Fortune 500 businesses too. They have resources, but many of them have inflexible architectures that have been built over many years and they are going to have to move much quicker than they ever thought possible.”

He recently spoke to a large healthcare payment processing company that said it couldn’t change any part of its infrastructure because if operations are paused, people can’t enrol in healthcare. Separately, a foreign government told him they couldn’t make any changes to their infrastructure during tax collection season. His response? “Well, that’s going to have to change”.

All this is good for business, however. Since Anthropic provoked a global panic three months ago with the roll-out of Mythos, which it billed as a powerful cyberweapon, Palo Alto Networks has had nearly 2,000 customers ask for one-to-one briefings on the cyberthreats of AI models.

Fears about the hacking capabilities of AI agents have helped drive shares in Palo Alto Networks up 80 per cent so far this year, ranking it among the top performers in the S&P 500. Third-quarter revenue climbed 31 per cent year-on-year to $3 billion.

Palo Alto Networks, founded in 2005 and based in Santa Clara, California, has been winning customers using multiple rival cybersecurity products by offering a single platform of its own offerings. The company claims its platform means businesses can cut costs because they don’t have to integrate a number of different products and can speed up workflows and security processes.

The business also claims its scale is an advantage in the age of AI because it can “keep pace with what the frontier AI models are finding in terms of vulnerabilities” and detect incidents in seconds before helping companies to fix vulnerabilities quickly.

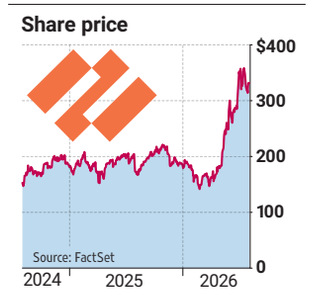
“One of our primary messages to chief financial officers is, we’ll make you more secure and we’ll do it with a better ROI [return on investment] and reduce your cost,” Jenkins said. “That’s a powerful message that’s helping drive our growth.”

Jenkins said AI is also enabling Palo Alto Networks and other large cybersecurity players to make their products better, as faster coding means they can roll out new features at a record rate.

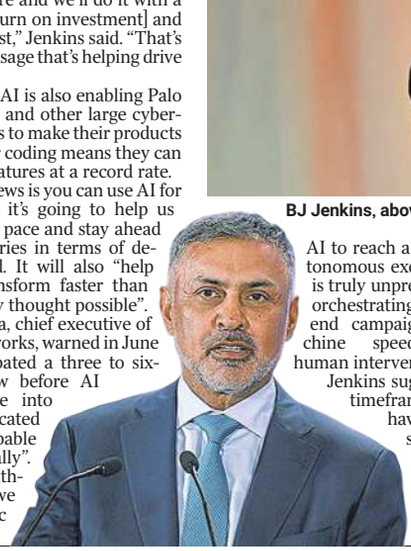
“The good news is you can use AI for good too, and it’s going to help us hopefully keep pace and stay ahead of the adversaries in terms of defence,” he said. It will also “help customers transform faster than they previously thought possible”.

Nikesh Arora, chief executive of Palo Alto Networks, warned in June that he anticipated a three to six-month window before AI systems evolve into “more sophisticated hacking capable entities globally”. He added: “Within a few years, we expect agentic AI to reach a level of autonomous execution that is truly unprecedented ... orchestrating end-to-end campaigns at machine speed without human intervention.”

Jenkins suggested that timeframe may have undershot the mark, given the arrival of Kimi K3, an open-



BJ Jenkins, above, of Palo



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Shipping broker rides a

Charlotte Bend

The shipping broker Clarkson has navigated the crisis in the Gulf to report a record profit in an “exceptional” first half of the year.

The FTSE 250 group said pre-tax profit increased by just under 50 per cent to £55.6 million in the six months to June 30, compared with the same period last year. That was on revenue of £413.5 million, which rose 39 per cent from £298 million.

The company said its record first half resulted from “strong trading conditions, accentuated by turbulence in the Strait of Hormuz.” It expects full-year performance to be materially ahead of market expectations.

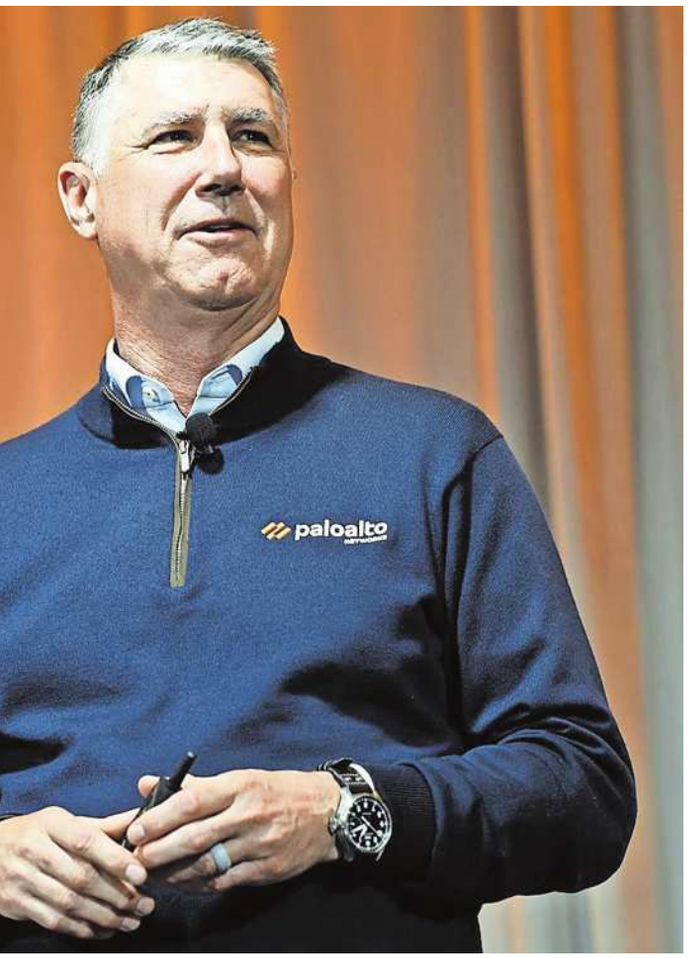
Clarkson’s core broking business, which matches owners of cargo vessels with the oil companies, miners and commodity traders who need to move goods around the world, recorded its strongest ever first half.

Shipping has been at a near standstill across the strait since the US and Israel launched military strikes on Iran in February. Only a handful of vessels are passing through the waterway, which would typically carry a fifth of global oil and liquefied natural gas supplies.

Shortages of vessels, and the fact cargos were forced to take longer routes, squeezed up freight rates, to which Clarkson’s commissions are tied. The disruption led to countries in Asia seeking increased cargo volumes from longer-haul destinations in the West, while the market was also tightened by ships trapped in the Gulf.

Clarkson’s financial division, which provides investment banking to the sector, also performed strongly, with revenues in the first half approaching the level achieved across the whole of

about where AI will go'



Alto Networks, is acutely aware of the risks posed by AI; left, Nikesh Arora

source model released last month by Moonshot, the Chinese AI pioneer, which claimed it is on a par with some of the top platforms from OpenAI and Anthropic. Jenkins said it was another "awareness moment" for businesses.

"Adversaries have access to these things and customers have to think about what that's going to mean to them now," he said.

"Just as fast as you're thinking about business transformation, you have to think the same way about your cyber transformation and how you defend yourself in this new world."

Palo Alto Networks has been shielded from a broader sell-off this year driven by fears that AI products will hit profits at software providers. Analysts believe cybersecurity products will be harder to replicate than other software.

However, Jenkins said he does not think all companies working with the so-called frontier AI labs are protected from those labs learning from their workflows to create rival products.

"Everybody has to be paranoid about where these models will go and what they will do," he said. The "concept of a 'moat' or 'what is your defensibility in your business' is going to become very important because I don't think the large language model companies are stopping at what their capabilities are going to be. We've seen it evolve very quickly over the last two years. My expectation is over the next two years they're going to continue to look at what these models could do and what businesses they could disrupt."

He added: "Obviously, Anthropic and OpenAI both want to get public and they're going to have to continue to find top-line growth to support their intentions." Both AI labs dispute claims that they are stealing intellectual property or copying their customers' business models.

Anthropic said: "By default, we do not train our models on customer content from our commercial products. Our commercial terms prohibit it. We also don't read individual customer conversations, code or files to shape our strategy, decide what products to build or choose which markets to pursue."

Sam Altman, chief executive of OpenAI, told the *Invest Like the Best* podcast last week that OpenAI has "no interest" in "trying to eat every start-up, every company". He said it was focused on "making the best, the most abundant, the most useful AI that we can, and making it something like electricity that just seeps throughout the entire economy and empowers people".

Jenkins said the Mythos moment "catalysed" the US government into realising "they had to do something on cyber" and that "engagement has gone up exponentially". He added: "I think they are working very hard to understand how we utilise these models to defend and protect ourselves better."

Last week President Trump said he was considering AI "controls" after OpenAI's disclosure that one of its AI systems escaped containment during a security test, adding that he did not want to "restrict" AI developers from building new products.

In a statement, Arora warned against "over-regulation" of AI, despite the cyber risks. He suggested governments focus on answering questions including "those around IP, what can models train on? Liability? Who's responsible? ... Need to protect critical infrastructure and how do we keep our public systems secure and leverage technology? Around defence and use of AI."

He is supportive of proposals for a "self-regulatory body composed of a set of actors who want the safe and rapid development of cost effective AI".

He said: "Easier said than done, but worth chasing."

London AI chip start-up sees its value hit $3.3bn

Chris Dorrell

A London-based semiconductor start-up founded by a 25-year-old British entrepreneur has been valued at $3.3 billion after it raised funds to develop the latest generation of chips underpinning the artificial intelligence economy.

Olix's $312 million funding round, which tripled the company's valuation, was led by the New York-based fund Fundomo, alongside investment from Arm Holdings, the Cambridge-based chip designer, and Reed Hastings, the co-founder of Netflix.

Olix was founded in 2024 by Harrogate-born James Dacombe. Dacombe, who dropped out of school at 16, is also chief executive of CoMind, a brain-monitoring company he founded in 2018 when he was just 17.

According to Dun & Bradstreet, the data analytics company, Dacombe held a 38.6 per cent stake in Olix before the funding round through Bletchley Industries, a holding company.

Olix is developing a new generation of "inference chips" that would underpin the process of running AI models.

Rather than relying on improvements in general-purpose graphics processing units, Olix is developing specialised chips for each part of the inference process. It then connects these chips with an "optical interconnect" that transfers data using lasers rather than copper wires.

The company said its approach "will make existing frontier AI more affordable and abundant, and more importantly, unlock the deployment of far more powerful models in the future."

Olix's technology does not rely on scarce components in the chip supply chain, such as advanced packaging or high-bandwidth memory, meaning that it can scale volumes "in spite of the supply chain shortages across the industry".

The funding round puts Olix on track to deliver its DX-1 platform to its first customers by the second half of next year. This chip is focused on the stage at which a model reasons and generates its output.

The company is also hiring for roles across silicon, photonics and systems engineering at its offices in London and Bristol, as well as Austin, Toronto and San Francisco. Alongside the funding, Olix appointed Matt Briers as chief financial officer. Briers was finance chief at Wise, the fintech company, for nine years from 2015.

Olix received backing from the government's Sovereign AI fund as part of the round. The fund invests in British companies across the AI supply chain. It is its fifth investment since its launch in April.

Joséphine Kant, head of ventures at Sovereign AI, said: "Olix is completely rethinking what an inference chip should be from first principles and doing it from the UK. The company is two years old and already one of the most ambitious hardware businesses in Britain."

Olix is one of a handful of innovative UK-based semiconductor start-ups that are hoping to break Nvidia's hold on the semiconductor market. Fractile raised $220 million in May to develop its technology, which aims to fuse memory and computing power together in one chip.

25
James Dacombe's age. He dropped out of school aged 16
Source: Times research

The government is trying to nurture the development of the UK's semiconductor industry through its £1.1 billion AI hardware plan, which includes advanced commitments for chips from start-ups. The government wants to capture 5 per cent of the global AI chip market.

Andy McLean, chief executive of the UK Semiconductor Centre, said the funding round was a "clear signal" that British technology could compete on a global stage, but added that the challenge was to ensure that Olix could scale from the UK.

He added: "That means creating the right environment for them to access capital, talent and international markets, so that the next generation of global semiconductor leaders is built here, stays here, and continues to create economic value for the UK."

wave of Gulf turbulence

Clarkson said freight rates increased as the US-Iran war brought disruption

2025. The higher-margin research arm benefited from the "considerable geopolitical complexity" as companies sought out real-time market data.

Andi Case, chief executive, said: "Uncertainty remains over the timing and extent of the strait reopening and disruption to trade flows will take time to adjust as energy security concerns influence decision-making.

"A progressive reopening of the strait in the second half is expected to support restocking activity, and recovering volumes have the potential to provide additional support to shipping markets.

"Conversely, an extended period of closure would act as a headwind to global trade and economic growth.

"Restoring balance to disrupted supply chains, repositioning vessels and rebuilding trade flow patterns are processes that take time to fully materialise and will provide opportunities across shipping markets."

Clarkson shares, which are up by a third this year, rose 425p, or 9 per cent, to close at £51.55 yesterday. The interim dividend was raised to 35p from 33p, a 24th consecutive year of higher payouts.

Transport contract gives Capita relief

Helen Cahill

Capita has secured an extension of a Transport for London contract worth £424 million as it seeks to restore its relationship with the government in the wake of a crisis in the civil service pension scheme.

The troubled outsourcer's shares rose 7½p, or 2.9 per cent, to close at 266p yesterday, after it won a five-year extension to its contract running the capital's congestion charge and ultra-low emission zone (Ulez) schemes.

The group is seeking to restore its reputation after a fiasco in its administration of the Civil Service Pension Scheme. Capita has said it is prepared to lose money on the pension contract after it was dogged by problems and a growing backlog of cases.

Capita has been running TfL's road-user charging schemes for ten years and the newly signed contract includes an option for a further extension until September 2033.

Gavin Dunkley, managing director of Capita's public transport division, said: "This extension reflects the contribution of many people across Capita and our supply chain partners who have delivered and transformed these services over a number of years, combining operational expertise with technology to support the evolution of London's road-user charging schemes."

Capita also announced it had completed a deal to sell its private sector call-centre business to Inspirit Capital, and that it could be in line for payment of £61.5 million between 2027 and 2030, depending on the performance of the business under its new owners. Capita said the sale would help "significantly streamline its operations" and focus on divisions delivering "complex, differentiated middle and back-office services in large growing markets".

The outsourcer warned last month that it would take a hit to profits of between £25 million and £40 million over its mismanagement of the Civil Service Pension Scheme.

Richard Holroyd, chief executive of Capita's public service division, told a Commons select committee it would make a loss on the contract as it invested to restore service levels. He said: "The government is a major strategic client for us. So we can't think about profitability here, what we are thinking about is reputation across the rest of the business, and how we recover here."

Capita's shares lost 13.5 per cent on the day it admitted its performance on the contract had "not been good enough" and they fell a further 20.7 per cent two days later when it told investors of the financial impact.

New boss for New Look, but chain faces same old fight

Isabella Fish Retail Editor

New Look has appointed a chief executive from within its leadership team as the struggling fashion retailer looks to build on the turnaround efforts under its outgoing boss.

Lynda Petherick, currently New Look's chief operating officer, will succeed Helen Connolly, who is leaving the business to become chief executive of George at Asda. Connolly will remain with New Look until September 21 to support the leadership transition.

The appointment comes as the privately owned retailer seeks to revive its fortunes after years of decline from its heyday as a FTSE 250 business.

Once one of the UK's dominant high street fashion chains, New Look has battled fierce competition from fast-fashion rivals, supermarkets and online retailers while working to redefine its place in an increasingly crowded value-fashion market.

Mike Coupe, New Look's chairman, said the board was "delighted" to appoint Petherick. "New Look is in a stronger position than it has been for many years," he said. "She combines strong commercial judgment and operational discipline with a deep understanding of our customers, our brand and the role that data and technology will play in our future."

Petherick inherits a business that has undergone significant restructuring. Connolly took on the top job in 2022 with a strategy focused on improving profitability through tighter cost control, better inventory management and greater use of data and technology.

Under Connolly's leadership, the retailer also expanded its Club New Look loyalty programme and sharpened its focus on core womenswear categories as it sought to rebuild its appeal among value-conscious shoppers. Despite those efforts, New Look continues to face significant challenges on the high street. It has shrunk dramatically from its peak, when it operated more than 850 shops globally during an aggressive expansion phase. It now trades from about 300 stores, having closed hundreds of underperforming locations over the past decade.

The company has also changed ownership after years of financial strain. Brait, the South African investment group, first acquired a controlling stake in 2015 before New Look underwent a major debt restructuring in 2020 that handed significant ownership to lenders including the asset manager Alcentra through a debt-for-equity swap.

The retailer, founded in 1969 by Tom Singh, is now jointly owned by Brait and Alcentra, which appointed Rothschild & Co last year to explore strategic options, including a potential sale.

Retail analysts said Petherick's appointment offered continuity but warned that the retailer must now convert operational improvements into sustained sales growth. Nicholas Found, from Retail Economics, said New Look needed a "sharper identity and a stronger reason for shoppers to choose it. Shein sets a relentless pace online, Primark has formidable scale and new entrant Lefties is bringing Inditex's buying power and store technology into UK value fashion. New Look must respond with a clearer fashion point of view, faster reactions to trends and a better shopping experience."

NEW LOOK

New Look, which posted improved full-year profits, has chosen an insider, Lynda Petherick, left, as chief executive

A trading update showed earnings before interest, tax and other deductions for its latest financial year rose to £36.6 million from £14.3 million, supported by stronger margins, less discounting and a lower cost base. Revenue declined by 3.6 per cent to £713.2 million, while gross profit margin improved by 2.7 per cent. First-quarter equivalent earnings increased to £17.4 million, while the retailer confirmed it had refinanced its debt facilities, extending key maturities to 2029.

However, previously published statutory results highlighted the scale of the challenge. Revenue fell 6.5 per cent to £687.7 million in the year to the end of March last year, amid continued store closures and difficult high street trading, while the retailer posted an operating loss of £47.6 million compared with a £17.4 million profit a year earlier.

Court battle set to cost Vietnamese airline $220m

Mark Ludlow

A Vietnamese budget airline faces a total damages bill of at least $220 million after losing a third High Court trial over an aircraft leasing dispute with a London-based investment firm.

Vietjet, controlled by Vietnam's first female billionaire, Nguyen Thi Phuong Thao, was already facing a $193 million damages bill from earlier trials over the return of four Airbus A321 aircraft after it breached a rental deal with FitzWalter Capital during the pandemic.

In a High Court ruling, judge Simon Birt awarded FitzWalter Capital and its aviation arm, FitzWalter Aviation, $18.3 million in lost rent for the aircraft, with total damages from the third trial, including legal costs, yet to be set.

The verdict is expected to be one of the final acts in a long-running legal dispute between Vietjet and FitzWalter, the investment firm co-founded by former Macquarie Group executive Ben Brazil in 2020.

The legal battle, which has been fought in courtrooms in London, Hanoi and Singapore, has grown increasingly acrimonious after FitzWalter last year tried unsuccessfully to freeze the airline's global assets until it had paid the outstanding compensation.

During the third trial, Vietjet had argued that FitzWalter — which bought the aircraft leases during Covid — had already profited from the sale of the aircraft after they were returned to the London firm, describing its new $100 million claim as an "opportunistic and unjustified grab for money".

Vietjet lawyers said the new claim from FitzWalter was a "scheme to profit from the damage to the airlines' income during the pandemic".

Before the latest trial, Vietjet, which is listed in Ho Chi Minh City with a market capitalisation of $3.64 billion, had paid only about $2 million in damages to FitzWalter. The third trial in the High Court involved FitzWalter claiming damages for the repair, maintenance and operation of the aircraft after their return.

FitzWalter Capital and Vietjet did not respond to requests for comment.

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Drought and heat are driving British pea farmers to consider crop swaps

Chickpeas and lentils are on the cards as UK agriculture adapts to the changing climate, writes **Guy Taylor**

JASON BYE FOR THE TIMES

Allen Giles, general manager of a farm in Lincolnshire that is expecting its second consecutive poor harvest of peas. Ladybirds have saved the crop from aphids whose spread is accelerated by the heat

"It's been tough, really tough. We haven't had any rain in six weeks," says Allen Giles, general manager at the Holbeach Marsh farming co-operative, reflecting on another difficult British pea harvest. "Only hindsight will tell, but in five or six years' time, if this weather continues, then we may not have peas in this area any more."

We are standing in a sun-baked field in Lincolnshire at the height of the UK harvesting season, a manic eight-week period in which growers work around the clock, seven days a week, producing an estimated 160,000 tonnes of peas each year. There is a relentless engine hum as colossal viners costing £750,000 apiece comb through rows of stems and foliage of the pea plant.

It will all be over by mid-August, but scorching temperatures and drought-like conditions mean farmers and processors are already expecting a second consecutive poor harvest.

Last year's was the earliest in well over a decade and vining pea growers across Lincolnshire, Norfolk, Suffolk and East Yorkshire reported a near-third drop in the number of peas picked and processed.

Giles picks out a cream-coloured ladybird from the crop: "That's my pet one, I put it in my pocket and bring it out for interviews," he jokes, although the harsh reality is they may have saved his harvest this year.

Successive heatwaves have accelerated the spread of disease-carrying aphids, tempered only by a recent proliferation in ladybirds, which have helped to keep pests under control.

"We've had lots of ladybirds this year and we haven't been spraying for aphids because we wanted them to do the job, and to some extent they have. So it helps us, but there's about a year lag. There won't be so many ladybirds going into the winter and we'll probably end up with an aphid problem next year."

Giles's co-operative typically harvests about 10,000 tonnes of peas across 2,200 hectares of land each year, the majority of which are then frozen. Yet with temperatures in Britain reaching record levels this summer, he is increasingly being forced to switch to more climate-suited crops.

"We've grown some chickpeas this year for the very first time and they look quite good, they've enjoyed the hot weather," he says.

Lentils are also on the cards and there are even discussions about producing hummus, given that one of his growers lays claim to establishing the first English olive oil company.

"As a co-operative, no farmer will make any money on peas this year, and we didn't last year. We get paid by the tonne, we need tonnes per hectare to make this land profitable. That's nobody's fault, that's just the weather."

Peas mature rapidly and the hotter the temperature, the shorter the time processors have to freeze or can them before they begin their journey to the supermarket shelves.

Innovations, including drought and disease-resistant varieties, can help protect yields but often take years to become commercially available.

To maintain peak tenderness, peas harvested in Lincolnshire are canned within just six hours at a plant in Long Sutton, which is owned by the food group Princes and remains the only pea cannery in the UK.

Truckloads of peas are delivered to the site each day. They are poured on to a series of winding conveyor belts, where they are washed thoroughly and then checked using a "tenderometer".

Dozens of metal cans zip around the factory each second, with about 24 million cans and 40 billion peas produced each year.

Princes, which is best-known for its tinned tuna and Napolina chopped tomatoes, has forecast yields from this year's pea harvest to be about 60 per cent, only marginally higher than in 2025 and far below the more than 100 per cent reported in 2024 when healthy rainfall and produced a bumper crop.

Speaking to The Times, Giuseppe Mastrolia, an Italian serving as interim chief executive at Princes, is candid about the challenges ahead.

"Climate change is a topic that's going on across all different areas — in pasta, in tomatoes. Things are changing," he says. "We need to be prepared and we are already implementing changes. Climate is touching the whole industrial structure."

Large swathes of England and the entirety of Wales have reached the threshold for drought this summer and wildfires have wreaked havoc in parts of Europe.

Increasingly hostile conditions have affected farmers across the spectrum, from wheat and oats, to livestock and vegetables, and the National Farmers' Union has warned of potential shortages of certain food products. Last week, bosses at Britain's largest supermarkets, including Tesco, Waitrose and Sainsbury's, were among the signatories of an urgent letter to the new prime minister Andy Burnham, warning of the risk posed by climate change and extreme weather to the nation's food supplies.

The canning plant is run by Princes, whose interim chief is Giuseppe Mastrolia

The problems have piled pressure on a sector already grappling with rising costs and a host of macroeconomic and policy-related challenges in recent years.

Princes, which is one of Europe's largest food producers, was forced to push through emergency price increases this year after the Iran war inflated energy and packaging costs and led to global shortages of fertiliser.

"We took a hit in March and April. Things have slowed down, but there is still an uncertainty around," Mastrolia says. Cuts to government support and increasing employment costs have also hit Britain's food industry hard in recent years.

Yet on the Lincolnshire pea farm, it seems clear that the weather has become the starkest threat. Mastrolia agrees with Giles about the opportunities in chickpeas, particularly given rising demand for protein-rich foods.

He is concerned, however, that the poor harvest will make it increasingly difficult to source and sell products locally.

"What we try to do with peas is sell what we produce and pack in the UK, but given the circumstances this year, we won't be able to fulfil demand. Last year we bought some frozen peas, still in the UK from Scotland, so we are trying to source locally, but the best is to produce fresh peas."

Only half joking, he adds: "Maybe we'll grow tomatoes in the UK."

Business

The Times unit trust information service

ALLIANZ GLOBAL INVESTORS
Inv Serv: 020 7065 1400 Helpline: 0800 317 573

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Strategic Bond Fund ‡	130.36		+0.35	8.09
UK Equity A ‡	396.08		+1.54	3.98
UK Growth ‡	10202.48		+61.17	2.26

ARTEMIS FUND MGRS
0800 092 2051
Authorised Inv Funds

Global Income Fund R Acc ‡	370.37		-1.29	...
Global Income Fund R Inc ‡	208.28		-4.01	...
Global Select Fund R ‡	225.15		-1.12	...
High Income Fund R Inc ‡	67.82		+0.11	...
Income Fund R Acc ‡	811.87		-2.25	...
Income Fund R Inc ‡	311.18		-0.86	...
Monthly Dist & R Inc ‡	90.73		-0.54	...
SmartGarp Eurp Equity R ‡	886.98		-0.28	...
SmartGarp Global Equity R ‡	673.22		-0.40	...
SmartGarp UK Equity R ‡	4272.55		-26.03	...
Strategic Assets R Acc ‡	93.33		-0.92	...
Strategic Bd R M Acc ‡	116.03		+0.13	...
Strategic Bd R M Inc ‡	52.46		+0.06	...
Strategic Bd R Q Acc ‡	115.83		+0.13	...
Strategic Bd R Q Inc ‡	52.32		-0.18	...
UK Select R Acc ‡	1332.25		+4.19	...
Uk Smaller Cos R Acc ‡	2307.95		+9.10	...
UK Special Sits R Acc ‡	1094.81		+1.93	...

AXA FRAMLINGTON UNIT MGMT
Dling: 0845 602 1952 Priv Clients:0845 777 5511

Health ‡	3255		-55.00	...
UK Select Opps Inc ‡	2135		-4.00	1.15
UK Sml Cos Inc ‡	321.3		+0.10	0.38
UK Sust Eqty R Dis ‡	236		-0.50	1.15

AXA FUND MANAGERS
Admin & Enq 0117 989 0808
UK/Global Investment Companies

Global Gwth Acc R ‡	288.1		...	0.52
Japan Acc A ‡	162.3		...	1.51

CIS UNIT MANAGERS
08457 46 46 46

European Growth ‡	294.40		...	1.14
Sus Leaders ‡	1026		...	1.48
UK Growth ‡@	878.80		...	1.71
UK Income ‡@	259.60		...	3.92

CLOSE FUND MANAGEMENT
Dealing 020 7426 6232

Winchester ‡	5513.68		...	0.62

COLUMBIA THREADNEEDLE INVESTMENTS
Enqs:0870 601 6183 Dealing: 0870 6083
Share Class 1-Retail

Euro Gwth & Inc ‡	1584		-13	0.10
FTSE All Shr Track ‡	596		-2.9	2.70
Global Gwth SCI ‡	393.1		-0.4	...
Strategic Bd ‡	227.8		+0.2	3.90

EDENTREE INV MGMT
0800 358 3010

Sust Eur Eqty A Dis ‡@	494		+4.70	1.77
Sust Gbl Eqty A Dis ‡	452.7		+0.70	0.55
Sust Mgd Income ‡@	141.8		-0.20	4.72
Sust Sterling Bond A Dis ‡	85.1		+0.28	4.98
Sust UK Eqty A Dis ‡@	253.4		-1.00	1.63
Sust UK Eqty Opps A Dis ‡@	324.8		+1.10	1.42

FIDELITY INTERNATIONAL
Private Clnts:0800 414161 Broker Dlgs:0800 414181

Amer Spec ‡	2902		...	...
American ‡	7863		...	...
Euro Opps ‡	728.4		...	0.49
European ‡	4347		...	0.78
Global Focus ‡	3600		...	...
Global High Income Bond A Dis ‡	22.29		...	6.60
Global Special Sits ‡	8818		...	...
Japan ‡	945.7		...	0.35
Moneybldr Bal ‡	48.88		...	0.60
Moneybldr Inc ‡	28.15		...	5.31
Moneybldr UK Ind ‡	201.62		...	2.48
Special Sits ‡	7417		...	1.67

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
UK Opportunities Fund A Dis ‡	105.5		...	1.43

HALIFAX INVESTMENT FUND MGRS
01296 386 386
Authorised Inv Funds
Share Class C

Corporate Bond ‡	37.44		...	4.50
Intl Gwth ‡	211.4		...	0.60
UK FTSE 100 IT ‡	108.4		...	...
UK FTSE All-S IT ‡	120.2		...	...

HSBC GLOBAL ASSET MGMT (UK)
Enq:0845 745 6123 Dlg:0845 745 6126 Mon-Frid:8-6
HSBC Index Tracker Investment Funds (OEIC)

Amer Ind Acc ‡	1591		+9	0.79
Euro Ind Acc ‡	1841		+1	2.30
Euro Ind Inc ‡	1066		...	2.35
FTSE 100 Ind Acc ‡	441.1		-2.4	2.50
FTSE 100 Ind Inc ‡	179.0		-1.0	2.65
FTSE 250 Ind Acc ‡	402.0		+0.9	2.92
FTSE 250 Ind Inc ‡	217.9		+0.4	2.91
FTSE All-S Acc ‡	1108		-6	2.66
FTSE FTSE All-S Inc ‡	498.5		-2.5	2.80
Japan Ind Acc ‡	230.8		+1.6	1.46
Japan Ind Inc ‡	167.4		+1.1	1.50
Pacific Ind Acc ‡	1023		-18	1.62
Pacific Ind Inc ‡	578.8		-10.4	1.64

HSBC Investment Funds (OEIC) Retail Share Class

Corp Bd Acc ‡@	311.4		+0.7	4.30
Income Acc ‡	1062		...	3.28
Income Inc ‡@	399.6		-2.5	3.34
Monthly Inc Acc ‡@	313.4		...	3.75
Monthly Inc Inc ‡@	155.9		...	4.02
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Acc ‡@	223.3		-1.5	3.01
UK Grth & Inc Ret B Inv ‡@	86.55		-0.59	3.07

HSBC Specialist Investment Fds (OEIC)

American Index Retail Inc ‡	1226		+7	0.78

INVESCO FUND MGRS LTD
Dling:0800 085 8571 Inv Serv:0800 085 8677
Brkr Serv:0800 028 2121
Invesco Funds

Corp Bond ‡	231.43		...	4.02
High Income Dis ‡	429.32		...	3.18
Income & Growth Dis ‡	506.29		...	3.09
Income Inc ‡	1652.51		...	2.89
Money Acc ‡	107.76		...	3.62
Monthly Inc Plus Dis ‡	92.13		...	5.80
UK Opps UK Acc ‡	1392.79		...	1.47
UK Sml Cos Eqty Acc ‡	1336.1		...	1.45

INVESTEC FUND MGRS LTD
Broker Support and Dealing: 020 7597 1900
OEIC Series I, ii,iii & iv

American A Acc ‡	859.24		+22.69	...
Cautious Managed A Acc ‡	468.35		-0.3	2.63
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡	267.75		-0.7	2.50
Diversified Growth A Acc ‡	326.18		+1.27	0.21
Diversified Growth Inc ‡	119.99		+0.47	0.96
Diversified Income A Acc ‡	375.12		+0.16	3.80
Diversified Income A Inc ‡	67.55		-0.33	5.22
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Ac ‡	143.74		+0.02	5.99
Emerging Mkts Blended Debt A Inc ‡	66.58		+0.01	7.70
Emerging Mkts Equity A Ac ‡	285.78		-3.94	0.04
Emerging Mkts Leaders A Acc ‡	1210.74		-14.1	...
Global Equity A Acc ‡	299.98		-1.25	...
Global Franchise A Acc ‡	400.5		+1.97	...
Global Free Enterprise A Acc ‡	2078.68		+9.98	...
Global Gold A Acc ‡	481.85		...	...
Global Special Situations A Acc ‡	524.03		+5.6	...

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Global Special Situations A Inc ‡	402.02		+4.29	...
UK Special Situations A Acc ‡	2724.9		+20.83	1.03
UK Special Situations A Inc ‡	937.12		+7.17	1.05

For ISIS Asset Mgmt see F&C Fd Mgmt Ltd (OEIC)
JANUS HENDERSON INVESTORS
Investor Serv: 0800 832 831 Dlng:0845 946 4646

All Stcks Credit A Inc ‡	113.5		...	4.40
Asian Div Inc U Trust Inc ‡	97.61		...	5.40
Cautious Managed Fd A Acc ‡	357.2		...	3.20
Cautious Managed A Inc ‡	153.3		...	3.90
China Opp Fund A Acc ‡	1327		+7	0.10
Emg Mkts Opps Fd A Acc ‡	296.9		...	...
Erpn Sel Opps Fd A Acc ‡	3208		-19	0.20
Fix IntMnthly Inc Fd Acc ‡	33.07		...	6.10
Global Equity Fund Acc ‡	6432		...	...
Global Equity Income A Ac ‡	87.29		+0.19	2.40
Global Tech A Acc ‡	6810		...	...
Instl UK Idx Opps A Acc ‡	178.6431		...	2.20
M-Asset Abs Rtn A Acc ‡	186.2		...	2.70
M-Man Active Fd A Acc ‡	332.3		+1.2	1.70
M-Man Inc Grth A Inc ‡	160.7		...	2.70
M-Man Inc Fd Grth A Acc ‡	230.2		...	2.70
Sterling Bond U Trst Acc ‡	229.5		...	4.40
Sterling Bond U Trst Inc ‡	55.43		...	4.40
Strategic Bond A Inc ‡	95.24		...	5.20
UK Abs Ret Fd A Acc ‡	206.6		-0.2	2.10
UK Alpha Fund A Acc ‡	198.4		-0.6	1.30
US Growth Fund A Acc ‡	2913		+34	...

J.P. MORGAN ASSET MANAGEMENT
OEIC

UK Equity Core E Net Acc ‡	8708.3000		-4.8000	2.50

JUPITER UT TRUST MANAGERS LTD
020 7581 3020

Distribution & Growth ‡	123.61		+0.6867	2.93
Euro Special Sits ‡	590.5		-0.5246	0.71
European ‡	3929.32		-0.5345	0.61
Financial Opps ‡	1335.24		+0.6240	1.01
Global Macro Bd L GBP ACC ‡	427.4		+0.4966	3.39
Merlin Bal Acc ‡	340.81		-0.2837	2.26

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	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Merlin Growth Acc ‡	819.99		+0.1086	0.20
Merlin Inc Acc ‡@	466.01		+0.1683	3.47
Merlin Wwide Inc ‡	599.01		+0.1291	...
UK Dynamic Equity L Dis ‡	291.25		+0.1427	1.75
UK Growth ‡	283.6		+0.1410	0.64
UK Income Trust ‡	1018.08		+0.3818	4.58

LEGAL & GENERAL (UT MANGRS) LTD
Enquiries: 0870 050 0955 Dealing: 0870 050 0956

Euro Ind Acc ‡@	806.2000		-90.0000	200.00
Euro Ind Inc ‡@	481.4000		-1070.0000	200.00
Fixed Int Acc ‡@	150.1000		+50.0000	460.00
Fixed Int Dist ‡@	62.0500		+21.0000	460.00
Global Health ‡	120.7		-0.2	1.00
Glob Tech Acc ‡	229.9		+2.7	...
High Inc Acc ‡	153.4000		+20.0000	580.00
Japan Ind Acc ‡	111.1000		+90.0000	130.00
Pacific Ind Acc ‡	403.5000		-820.0000	140.00
UK Index Trust Acc ‡	537.9000		-270.0000	250.00
Uk Index Trust Dist ‡	232.9000		-120.0000	250.00
US Ind Acc ‡@	1400		+17	0.50
Worldwide Acc ‡	465.8000		+40.0000	90.00

M&G SECURITIES
Enq:0800 390 390 Dealing Line: 0800 328 3196
Authorised Inv Funds

Charifund Inc ‡	1900.91		-1.5379	5.05

	Sell	Buy	+/-	Yld %
Sterling Class A Investment Funds 2				
Extra Income Inc ‡	831.2		-0.7901	5.06
Gilt & Fxd Int Inc ‡	67.05		+0.3893	4.39
Gl Hi Yd Bd Inc ‡	39.62		-0.4773	6.28
Index Linked Bd Inc ‡	101.34		+0.5457	1.56
Index Trckr Inc ‡	104.5		-1.0135	2.99
Short Dated Corp Bd Inc ‡	25.32		+0.1186	4.26
UK Select A Inc ‡	3261.44		-0.1231	2.68
Sterling Class A Investment Funds 3				
Corp Bd A Inc ‡	32.78		+0.3982	5.03
Dividend Inc ‡	66.74		-0.3881	5.35
Recovery A Inc ‡	140.56		-0.3898	2.89
Sml Cos Inc ‡	357.72		-0.1535	2.86
Sterling Class A Investment Funds 4				
Episode Allocation A Inc ‡	160.77		-0.7593	3.94

MARKS & SPENCER UNIT TRUST
0808 005 5555

High Income ‡	87.94		...	4.60
High Income Acc ‡	295.7		...	4.60
UK 100 Comp Acc ‡	721.7		...	3.10
UK 100 Comp Inc ‡	324.7		...	3.10
UK Select Port ‡	481.6		...	2.90
UK Select Port Acc ‡	1101.8		...	2.90
W'wide Mgd Acc ‡@	1315		...	0.20
Worldwide Mgd Acc ‡@	732		...	0.20

MORGAN STANLEY INVESTMENT MGMT
Enquiries: 0800 0961 962
The Morgan Stanley Funds (UK)
Class A Shares
Equity

Glob Bal Inc F F Acc ‡	1049.40		...	1.54
Glob Bal Inc F F Inc ‡	938.65		...	1.55
Glob Bal Inc F I Inc ‡	936.69		...	1.49
Glob Bal Inc F I Acc ‡	1046.53		...	1.47
Glob Bal Sust F F Acc ‡	1036.68		...	1.65
Glob Bal Sust F F Inc ‡	989.88		...	1.66
Glob Bal Sust F I Acc ‡	1034.12		...	1.57
Glob Bal Sust F I Inc ‡	989.45		...	1.60
Glob Br Eq Fund F Inc ‡	1101.43		...	4.33
Glob Br Eq Fund I Acc ‡	1735.19		...	4.30
Glob Br Eq Fund I Inc ‡	1164.49		...	4.42
Glob Br Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	14088.08		...	0.32
Glob Br Fund I Inc (PH) ‡	1625.4		...	0.45
Glob Br Fund L Acc (PH) ‡	1732.55		...	0.45
Glob Br Fund L Inc (PH) ‡	3789.23		...	0.33
Glob Quality Fund F Acc (PH) ‡	1516.73		...	0.49
Glob Quality Fund F Inc ‡	1485.28		...	0.51
Glob Quality Fund I Acc ‡	1526.43		...	0.34
Glob Quality Fund I Acc (PH) ‡	1511.51		...	0.34
Glob Quality Fund F Acc ‡	1542.49		...	0.51
Stg Corp Bond F F Acc ‡	144.36		...	4.76
Stg Corp Bond F F Inc ‡	97.89		...	4.80
Stg Corp Bond F I Inc ‡	1378.62		...	4.71
Stg Corp Bond F I Acc ‡	3054.03		...	4.61
US Adv F F Acc ‡	2352.85		...	...
US Adv F F Acc (PH) ‡	1409.68		...	...
US Adv F I Acc ‡	2477.47		...	...
US Adv F I Acc (PH) ‡	1459.61		...	...

SANTANDER UNIT TST MGRS
08457 413002

Equity Inc Inc ‡	242.7		...	...
Stkmkt 100 Tkr ‡	230.8000		...	...
UK Growth I Acc ‡	652.4		...	...
UK Growth Inc ‡	313.2		...	...

SCOTTISH MUTUAL INV MNGRES LTD
0141 248 6100

Far Eastern Inc	617.0700	649.4700	...	...
Mutual Far Eastern	1346.8200	1421.4500	-13.07	0.39
Mutual UK Eq	1429.4900	1508.7000	...	7.81
UK Equity Inc	562.2300	593.3800	...	7.81

SCOTTISH WIDOWS UNIT TRUST MNGRS
0845 300 2244
Overseas Growth Investment Funds
Tracker & Special Investment Funds

UK Trkr A Acc ‡	606.6		+1.80	...
UK Trkr A Inc ‡	276.1		+0.80	...

UK & Income Investment Funds

Corp Bond A Acc ‡@	329.1		+1.20	...
Corp Bond A Inc ‡@	107.9		...	...
Envir Invtr A Acc ‡	467.5		-5.30	2.10
Hi Inc Bond A Ac ‡@	296.8		+0.30	6.40
Hi Inc Bond A Inc ‡@	69.93		-0.29	6.40
Hi Res A Acc ‡	562.1		+1.10	...
Hi Res A Inc ‡	152.2		+0.40	...
Strat In A Acc ‡@	228.0		+0.10	...
Strat In A Inc ‡@	85.87		-0.34	...
UK Eq Trckr A ‡	135.5		-0.40	...

OEIC B Class

UK Trkr B Acc ‡	672.1		+2.00	...
UK Trkr B Inc ‡	274.5		+0.80	...

OEIC C Class

UK Eq Tkr C ‡	132.3		-0.40	...

STANDARD LIFE INVESTMENTS
0845 279 3003
Investment Funds (OEIC)-Retail Shares

AAA Inc CAT Acc ‡	98.36		...	2.52
AAA Inc CAT Inc ‡	51.06		...	2.52
AAA Income Acc ‡	108.5		...	...
Amer Eq Gth Acc ‡	287.4		...	...
Glb Advtg CAT Acc ‡	199		...	1.32
Glob Advtg Acc ‡	262.30		...	...
Higher Inc Acc ‡	185.30		...	...
Higher Inc Inc ‡	47.96		...	...
Managed Acc ‡	530.1		...	1.83
UK Ethical Acc ‡	255.7		...	...
UK Smlr Cos Acc ‡	797.5		...	...

SVS BROWN SHIPLEY FUNDS
Enquiries:0141 222 1151

Balanced A Acc ‡	183.87		...	2.02
Blanced A Inc ‡	155.61		...	2.07
Cautious A Acc ‡	132.19		...	2.44
Cautious A Inc ‡	104.55		...	2.48
Dynamic A Acc ‡	489.54		...	1.40
Dynamic A Inc ‡	428.31		...	1.41
Growth A Acc ‡	484.02		...	1.63
Income A Acc ‡	315.55		...	2.17

THREADNEEDLE INVESTMENTS
Client Serv: 0800 0684000
Retail Shares Class 1

Threadneedle HY Bd Rtl Inc ‡	39.3962		+3.56	4.65
Threadneedle Mnthly Etr Inc Inc ‡	101.3275		-11.07	2.75
Threadneedle SterlingCorp Bd Inc ‡	54.7834		+20.52	4.29
Threadneedle SterlingCorp Acc ‡	54.686		+20.33	3.97
Threadneedle Stg Bd Ret Inc ‡	39.4308		-4.23	4.18
Threadneedle Strat Bd Ret ‡	41.8872		+8.6	3.82
Threadneedle UK Eq Inc Rtl Inc ‡	118.9294		-34.04	3.53
Threadneedle UK Eqty & Inc Rtl Inc ‡	112.2595		+1.17	3.22
Threadneedle UK Instl Rtl ‡	248.5945		-81.98	1.35
Threadneedle UK Mnthly Inc Rtl Inc ‡	89.3796		-35.99	3.02
Threadneedle UK Rtl Inc ‡	165.5336		-46.86	1.34
Threadneedle U Smaller Cons Rtl Inc ‡	397.1485		-142.52	0.39

For Resolution see Ignis

TU FUND MANAGERS LTD

IFSL Marlborough Eur A Dis	994.6	994.6	...	1.23

* Yield expressed as CAR (Compound Annual Return); ‡ Ex dividend; ‡Middle price; . . . No significant data. # Periodic charge deducted from capital; @ Exit charge

British funds

12 month High	Low	Stock	Price (£)	+/–	Int Yld %	Grs rd yld

Index-Linked

73.08	63.68	Tr IL 0 1/8 50	64.20	+.77	0.78	2.52
66.33	57.06	Tr IL 0 1/8 52	57.38	+.81	0.44	2.52
101.91	97.20	Tr IL 0 1/8 28	99.39	+.10	0.13	0.43
100.99	97.18	Tr IL 0 1/8 29	98.28	+.12	0.13	0.78
98.49	94.73	Tr IL 0 1/8 31	95.56	+.28	0.13	1.04
88.33	82.97	Tr IL 0 1/8 36	83.50	+.40	0.15	1.90
82.85	76.16	Tr IL 0 1/8 39	77.47	+.58	0.16	2.17
79.32	72.11	Tr IL 0 1/8 41	72.88	+.60	0.17	2.27
74.05	65.19	Tr IL 0 1/8 44	67.10	+.63	0.19	2.43
71.23	62.87	Tr IL 0 1/8 46	63.49	+.64	0.20	2.49
68.00	59.19	Tr IL 0 1/8 48	59.81	+.68	0.21	2.51
60.61	50.05	Tr IL 0 1/8 56	50.59	+.81	0.25	2.44
58.90	48.59	Tr IL 0 1/8 58	49.59	+.81	0.25	2.41
54.25	43.57	Tr IL 0 1/8 65	44.30	+.80	0.28	2.28
53.89	40.40	Tr IL 0 1/8 68	43.22	+.83	0.29	2.22
57.66	42.98	Tr IL 0 1/8 73	44.55	+.85	0.28	1.94
97.88	93.36	Tr IL 0 1/8 34	93.81	+.41	0.80	1.62
79.12	70.87	Tr IL 0 1/8 47	71.44	+.72	1.05	2.49
62.70	49.79	Tr IL 0 1/8 62	52.37	+.92	0.72	2.36
87.38	80.77	Tr IL 0 1/8 40	81.22	+.62	0.77	2.23
84.28	76.46	Tr IL 0 1/8 42	76.94	+.64	0.81	2.33
104.16	100.95	Tr IL 1 1/8 27	101.17	+.06	1.24	0.35
103.67	99.28	Tr IL 1 1/8 32	99.66	+.41	1.25	1.31
86.56	72.33	Tr IL 1 1/8 54	74.86	+.95	1.67	2.49
85.60	73.36	Tr IL 1 1/8 55	74.40	+.96	1.68	2.49
99.52	94.19	Tr IL 1 1/8 35	94.58	+.36	1.19	1.77
97.09	90.76	Tr IL 1 1/8 37	91.20	+.56	1.23	2.00
102.53	95.86	Tr IL 1 1/8 38	96.51	+.47	1.81	2.08
99.42	88.49	Tr IL 1 1/8 49	89.34	+.94	2.10	2.48
248.27	236.46	Tr IL 2¼ 35	240.74	+1.19	0.83	1.74
349.35	338.41	Tr IL 4 1/8 30	341.25	+.61	1.21	0.91

Longs (Over 15 Years)

26.99	22.31	Tr 0 1/2 61	23.07	+.45	2.17	5.41
65.04	55.40	Tr 0 1/4 51	56.26	+.72	0.22	2.52
38.39	32.78	Tr 0 3/4 50	33.98	+.61	1.84	5.67
47.60	40.99	Tr 1 1/4 53	42.26	+.70	3.55	5.73
45.88	39.62	Tr 1 1/4 51	40.91	+.64	3.06	5.72
33.04	27.53	Tr 1 1/4 73	28.29	+.51	3.98	5.24
48.44	41.88	Tr 1 3/4 57	43.05	+.70	4.07	5.68
48.36	41.73	Tr 1 3/4 54	43.10	+.69	3.77	5.71
41.45	35.65	Tr 1 3/4 71	36.60	+.60	4.44	5.37
57.14	49.76	Tr 2 1/2 65	51.13	+.81	4.89	5.59
74.02	64.55	Tr 3 1/2 68	66.42	+.97	5.27	5.58
81.50	72.00	Tr 3 3/4 52	74.00	+.97	5.07	5.68
80.90	71.30	Tr 3 3/4 53	73.15	+.97	5.13	5.70
88.15	77.58	Tr 4 1/4 55	79.68	+1.06	5.33	5.68
83.52	73.44	Tr 4¾ 60	75.28	+1.05	5.31	5.65

Mediums (5-15 Years)

83.19	79.47	Tr 0 1/4 31	81.51	+.40	0.31	4.42
86.27	82.79	Tr 0 3/4 30	84.75	+.36	0.44	4.38
72.25	67.14	Tr 0 3/4 35	69.11	+.59	0.90	4.92
79.97	75.46	Tr 0 3/4 33	77.30	+.53	1.13	4.73
48.97	42.75	Tr 0 1/4 46	44.25	+.63	1.98	5.62
54.44	47.82	Tr 1 1/4 47	49.32	+.69	3.04	5.66
61.88	55.55	Tr 1 1/4 41	57.51	+.70	2.17	5.37
66.75	60.85	Tr 1 1/4 39	62.84	+.69	1.79	5.21
75.83	69.99	Tr 1 3/4 37	71.81	+.68	2.44	5.11
55.77	49.19	Tr 1 3/4 49	50.56	+.73	3.46	5.67
85.07	81.01	Tr 1¾ 32	82.84	+.44	1.21	4.57
82.54	74.42	Tr 3 1/2 45	76.29	+.88	4.59	5.57
95.49	90.74	Tr 3 1/4 33	92.16	+.54	3.53	4.66
80.41	72.57	Tr 3 1/4 44	74.49	+.85	4.36	5.55
100.00	85.76	Tr 3 3/4 38	87.79	+.79	4.27	5.17
102.40	96.34	Tr 4 1/4 34	97.96	+.64	4.59	4.81
101.93	0.01	Tr 4 1/4 35	97.30	+.67	4.62	4.89
96.45	87.54	Tr 4 1/4 42	89.72	+.92	5.02	5.46
102.33	0.01	Tr 4 1/4 32	98.45	+.52	4.32	4.55
100.56	94.70	Tr 4 1/4 34	96.28	+.64	4.41	4.82
99.39	92.65	Tr 4 1/4 36	94.49	+.71	4.50	4.98
100.00	88.42	Tr 4 1/4 39	90.53	+.88	4.69	5.26
100.00	86.92	Tr 4 1/4 40	89.22	+.92	4.76	5.33
90.97	81.54	Tr 4 1/4 46	83.73	+.97	5.08	5.60
89.58	79.95	Tr 4 1/4 49	82.05	+1.00	5.18	5.64
101.49	97.47	Tr 4 1/4 31	98.47	+.40	4.19	4.50
100.70	95.57	Tr 4 1/4 33	96.91	+.56	4.26	4.67
104.72	100.54	Tr 4 3/4 30	101.39	+.41	4.68	4.39
103.33	96.78	Tr 4 3/4 35	98.52	+.72	4.82	4.95
102.00	93.84	Tr 4 3/4 38	95.93	+.88	4.95	5.20
102.58	98.98	Tr 4 3/4 30	99.80	+.35	4.38	4.43
97.07	89.07	Tr 4 3/4 40	91.14	+.88	4.80	5.30
100.00	94.52	Tr 4 3/4 37	96.30	+.79	4.80	5.08
100.99	96.96	Tr 4 3/4 36	98.84	+.76	4.93	5.02
105.68	96.52	Tr 5 1/4 41	98.93	+.95	5.31	5.36
105.44	93.20	Tr

William Kay ***Tempus***
Buy, sell or hold: today's best share tips

A stock set to shine by comparison

MONY GROUP

Market cap	Dividend yield
£993m	6.4%

Increasingly widespread financial education is sending more and more of us to comparison sites for reassurance that we are signing up to the best deal. That has transformed the fortunes of Mony Group and its main offshoots, MoneySuperMarket, MoneySavingExpert and Quidco.

The management is not stopping there, conceiving an ambition to be an all-round financial companion. But Mony shares have nevertheless nearly halved in the past two years, before a partial recovery this year. Is it time to catch the upswing?

On July 21, Mony announced half-year results showing like-for-like revenue rising 6 per cent to £227.1 million, taking adjusted Ebitda up 3 per cent to £75.5 million. While insurance was easily the biggest revenue generator, at £122.1 million, the star performer yet again was home services — broadband, phones and energy bills — up 30 per cent but still producing only £28.2 million. In between, at £57.6 million, 9 per cent higher, was money, which compares banks and lenders.

Earnings per share rose from 9.3p to 9.7p, allowing a cautious nudge for the interim dividend, from 3.33p to 3.36p. However, net debt soared from £18.4 million to £31.8 million, due partly to cashflow falling by £7.5 million to £36.2 million.

Although it would have had a minimal impact on the results, the half-year included the launch of the grandly named Savings by MoneySuperMarket. That has now been followed with Investments by MoneySuperMarket, teaming with Octopus Group and Vanguard to offer 40 or so funds. The two new products are key steps towards Mony becoming a meaningful financial buddy.

The process really began with SuperSaveClub, a way of encouraging regular spending with the group in return for passes to zoos and theme parks, and other perks. It has 2.5 million members, is gaining 250,000 more every three months, and they spend at nearly double the rate of those outside the club. It accounts for 19 per cent of revenue and counting, especially as it has just launched a digital broker as SuperSaveClub Insurance.

The investment account goes a step further. Instead of redirecting customers to providers such as Hargreaves Lansdown or AJ Bell, they can open, manage and hold shares and mutual funds inside the MoneySuperMarket app, so they are competing with those other firms. There may be more products on those lines as the scheme expands.

Hardly any of this would be possible without AI, which, as usual, has been a double-edged sword. In February, Mony shares fell when the US online insurance marketplace Insurify unveiled what was claimed to be the insurance industry's first ChatGPT app. It lets users search, compare and receive personalised quotes for car cover. That was compounded by the stock market's general panic over AI's possible negative impacts. One fear was that users could simply ask AI chatbots to compare financial products, but that is shackled by regulatory curbs.

The buddy concept could open the door to a fresh category of customer, novice investors — and Mony reckons that epithet applies to 70 per cent of UK adults. As well as unseasoned investors seeking a simple solution for long-term planning, if the website is sufficiently friendly, it may also attract those who think they know more than they do. So the "arm around the shoulder" approach could be a powerful growth engine.

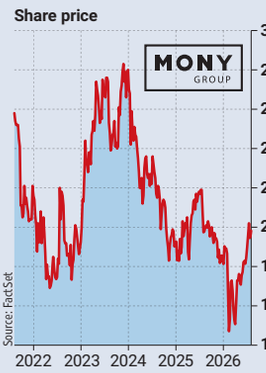
Another innovation is business banking, which opens this month and marks a first step into the small and medium-sized enterprise market. Although there are no plans to apply for a banking licence, the business arena is ripe for Mony's comparison expertise. It is only surprising it has taken it so long to tackle this market.

The group has faced multiple headwinds in recent years — such as energy price caps, car repair inflation and housing market slowdowns — that have slowed growth and led to the shares being heavily de-rated. Coming over the horizon are self-driving cars, which could have a huge impact over the next decade.

Nevertheless, analysts at Investec bank predict that this year's results will put the shares on a 10.4 price-earnings ratio and a solid 6.4 per cent yield. That is cheap for a company with so much in prospect and reflects an over-reaction to the inevitable but manageable hurdles.

ADVICE Buy
WHY A growth share available at an ex-growth price

Quids in



Revenue	
Insurance	£233m
Money	£106m
Home Services	£48m
Travel	£18m
Cashback	£53m
Total	£446m

Adjusted ebitda	
Insurance	£125m
Money	£67m
Home Services	£33m
Travel	£2m
Cashback	£8m
Total	£145m

Source: Mony Group

Builders supported by Trump's talk of peace

MARKET REPORT

President Trump's claim that there is a peace deal in the offing in America's war with Iran had a sharp knock-on effect on housing stocks (Jon Rees writes).

Trump's comments that "there's a deal on Hormuz and there will be a deal on the nuclear", despite sounding wearily familiar to traders, saw the price of oil drop sharply, with a barrel of Brent Crude down 4.7 per cent to $83.70.

That immediately lowered expectations that central banks would have to raise interest rates to keep a lid on inflation, and government bond yields fell sharply. The yield on ten-year gilts fell ten basis points to 4.95 per cent. Gilt yields drive swap rates, which indicate where the market thinks interest rates will be in future, and that in turn dictates fixed-rate mortgage pricing.

So, the whiff of a peace deal in the Gulf and the FTSE's housing stocks rose sharply amid expectations that mortgage rates are less likely to rise.

Barratt Redrow led the way, and led the FTSE 100, too, with shares up by 11¼p or 3.8 per cent at 304½p. Down on the FTSE 250, it was **Vistry** which felt the benefit with its shares up 23¼p, or 7.95 per cent, at 315p.

Wall Street report

Easing oil prices on hopes of a diplomatic resolution in the Middle East helped to calm worries that inflation could get worse and prompt the Federal Reserve to lift interest rates. Last week's better than expected results from Amazon continued to bolster other AI-related companies. The Dow Jones industrial average was 693.38 points, or 1.3 per cent, higher at 53,178.41, a new record, while the S&P 500 was up 110.78 points, or 1.5 per cent, at 7,600.50. The Nasdaq rose 540.04 points, or 2.1 per cent, to 25,913.90.

The day's biggest movers

Company	Change
Barratt Redrow	3.8%
Metlen Energy & Metals	3.6%
Rentokil Initial	3.5%
Smith & Nephew	3.3%
ICG	3.2%
Imperial Brands	-2.2%
British American Tobacco	-2.3%
Coca-Cola HBC	-2.5%
IG Group Holdings	-6.1%
AstraZeneca	-8.9%

ALAMY

Housing stocks rose amid expectations mortgage rates are less likely to rise

The housing stocks were already benefiting from a following wind after investment bank Berenberg upgraded Barratt Redrow and Bellway to "buy" from "hold". The bank said there were "interesting opportunities emerging" in the sector on the back of strong balance sheets.

The falling oil price affected the UK's leading oil companies, of course, but both BP and Shell gave investors reasons not to be too downhearted. BP completed the sale of its Gelsenkirchen refinery in Germany as it continued its cost-cutting drive under new boss Meg O'Neill, and investors appreciated its efforts. **BP** shares closed virtually flat, down just 0.07 per cent, at 552p.

Shell, struck a deal to sell its European onshore wind and solar business to France's TotalEnergies as it retreats from renewable energy. Its shares closed up 22p, or 0.7 per cent, at £34.06.

Ithaca Energy, the FTSE 250 constituent and North Sea oil producer, saw its shares fall 4p or 1.8 per cent to 258p.

The FTSE 100 closed down 10.35 points, or 0.1 per cent at 10,857.70, while the FTSE 250 was up 249.75 points, or 1.04 per cent at 24,224.77.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Takeover costs dent Senior

Senior, the engineering company, has swung to a pre-tax loss of £5.6 million in the first half of 2026, from a profit of £22.8 million in the same period last year, as it gears up for a takeover by a consortium of US investors.

The company, which is based in Hertfordshire, said the loss was due to one-off costs related to the £1.3 billion deal with the private equity firms Blackstone and Tinicum.

The FTSE 250 group supplies specialist parts for aircraft makers such as Boeing and Airbus, and is set to leave the London stock market after multiple private equity firms expressed an interest in it earlier this year. Blackstone and Tinicum won out with an offer of 297.85p per share in cash and a commitment to pay the full-year dividend of 2.15p.

At a shareholder meeting in May, 99.7 per cent of votes cast by investors were in favour of the deal.

David Squires, chief executive of Senior, said it was "pleased to have received strong shareholder support for the recommended cash acquisition" and that it was "making good progress" towards securing the necessary regulatory approvals, with the deal expected to complete by the end of the year.

Revenues in the half year were up 5 per cent to £390.8 million, while operating profit rose by 30 per cent to £37.7 million. The shares closed up 2p, or 0.7 per cent, at 292½p.

EasyJet Friday showdown

EasyJet has extended the deadline for Castlelake to decide whether to make a firm takeover offer, bringing it into line with the deadline for Apollo as the US private equity bidding war for the budget carrier enters a decisive week. EasyJet said Castlelake would now have until 5pm on Friday to challenge the 715p-a-share bid from Apollo, having previously been given a "put up or shut up" deadline of 5pm yesterday. Last month, Apollo made a surprise £5.7 billion bid for easyJet, which was accepted by the company's board. That trumped a previous £5.5 billion offer from Castlelake, which valued the shares at 690p.

Wingstop flying high

Wingstop UK said it plans to open up to 30 chicken restaurants this year across England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland after reporting a strong rise in annual revenue. Lemon Pepper Holdings, the master franchisee of Wingstop in the UK and Ireland, which brought the US chicken brand here in 2018, said revenues rose by 73 per cent to £216.4 million in 2025. The group, which is backed by Sixth Street, the private equity firm, is set to open its 100th UK restaurant, in Inverness, this month. The company, which employs about 3,000 people, also said it has signed an agreement to expand into Poland.

UBS fined $125m in US

UBS was fined $125 million by US regulators yesterday for violating the Bank Secrecy Act, the largest-ever civil fine against a broker-dealer for breaching the anti-money laundering (AML) law. The US Treasury's Financial Crimes Enforcement Network said UBS Financial Services had admitted to wilfully violating the Bank Secrecy Act by failing to implement and maintain an AML programme and by failing to file suspicious activity reports. UBS said it had co-operated with regulators and has made significant investments to strengthen its AML programme "in line with leading industry practices".

Business

EQUITY PRICES

Dividend yields Please note dividend yields are supplied by ICE Data Services. The yield is the sum of a company's annual 12-month dividend payments divided by the last day's closing share price.

12-month high and low High/low prices for UK equities and investment trusts are based on intra-day figures.

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
Automobiles & Part						
86¾	34½	Aston Martin Lag	35		...	-0.7
Banking & Finance						
265	177½	**Aberdeen Group**	245¼	+ 4⅛	6.0	11.4
1¼	0⅝	Acuity RM♦	0⅝		...	-3.4
3816	2624	**Admiral**	3802	+ 30	5.4	15.4
662½	414⅜	AJ Bell	587½		2.5	22.9
28761½	22372½	AON Corp‡	26523½	- 524½	0.9	...
1130	799	Arbuthnot♦	830	- 10	6.6	7.6
276½	145½	Ashmore Group	210½	+ 4¾	8.0	17.3
2126½	1479¼	Australia & NZ	1946¼	- 1	5.8	19.2
701½	590⅜	**Aviva**	701½	+ 8¼	5.6	26.1
1080	613	Banco Santander	1074	+ 24	1.5	13.8
554½	352⅝	**Bardays**	515	+ 6¼	2.2	11.8
17½	4	Blue Star Capital♦	4½		...	-2.3
710	613	BP Marsh & Ptnrs♦	676		5.4	5.1
363¾	212	Bridgepoint Grp	339⅝	+ 19	2.8	67.9
352	262	Chesnara	342½	- 1½	6.6	-67.8
490	346	City of London Grp	483	+ 7	6.8	16.2
563½	318½	Close Bros	433¼	+ 7⅛	...	-6.5
753	203	CMC Markets‡	677	+ 10	2.0	24.6
2957½	2057	Deutsche Bank	2744⅛	+ 21	3.1	10.2
93	74½	EFG-Hermes Hldgs	74½		0.9	...
240¼	136	EPE Special Opps♦	211		...	8.7
85	52	Fiske♦	67½		1.7	5.9
92	80	Foresight Ventures VCT	83		4.3	15.5
4572½	2095	Georgia Capital	4100	+ 145	...	2.5
57	43¼	Hansard Global	50	- 1	8.9	38.5
230	194	Helios U/W♦	223		4.5	7.7
1904	1246	**Hiscox**	1777	- 32	2.1	13.2
1604½	908½	**HSBC**	1597⅞	+ 21⅞	3.5	17.8
1956	1016	**IG Group**	1371	- 89	3.1	9.5
204	90⅞	Impax Asset Mgmt♦	112¼	+ 2⅜	8.9	7.1
2340	1424½	**ICG**	1949	+ 61	4.5	11.7
257½	195	Intl Personal Fin	250	+ ½	...	10.1
144¼	115½	Intl Public P'ship	144	+ 2	6.1	-13.4
690	499⅞	**Investec**	658½	+ 9½	5.8	8.5
76	60	Investment Co	75		...	...
72	48	IP Group	65¼	+ 2⅜	1.9	9.0
27	6½	Jarvis Securities♦	8		43.8	2.5
214½	133⅓	Jupiter Fund Mgmt	159⅝	+ 1⅜	3.8	8.3
700	549	Lancashire Hldgs	600	- 2½	2.8	6.7
310	217½	**Legal & General**	303¾	+ 3¾	7.2	30.4
12040	6905	**Lion Finance Group**‡	11930	+ 320	3.1	8.4
385	223	Liontrust Asset Mgmt‡	289½	+ 5½	6.6	18.8
61	35	Livermore Invs Grp♦	36½		8.6	16.5
117⅜	74⅛	**Lloyds Banking**	116⅝	+ 1⅜	3.4	16.7
22	14	LMS Capital	15½		25.7	...
10165	6684	**London Stock Exchange**	8490	+ 92	1.9	35.6
362½	247	**M&G**	361½	+ 3¾	5.7	28.7
327¼	154½	Man Group	304¼	+ 2	4.2	26.6
39⅛	20	Manx Financial Grp♦‡	24½		2.1	4.5
10	1¼	Marechale Capital♦	4¼		...	-14.8
185⅝	98¼	Metro Bank	179⅝	+ 2⅝	...	23.0
2621½	1864½	National Australia	2171½	+ 14¼	4.1	18.8
725½	500¼	**NatWest Group**	722⅝	+ 17	4.8	13.5
842⅝	438½	PayPoint‡	621	+ 4	6.4	10.5
1238	910¼	**Prudential**	1109	- 7	1.8	9.7
1¼	0⅛	Quantum Blockchain♦	0⅛		...	-1.9
209	150¼	Quilter	195½	+ 2¾	3.2	22.0
2500	1580	Rathbones Group	1664	- 4	6.0	15.4
325	245	Rockwood Strategic	317	+ 1	...	0.0
2458½	1620	S & U	1945		5.9	10.0
3	0⅛	Sancus Lending♦	1⅛		...	7.2
59¼	43	Schroder REIT	43½	- 1⅛	8.2	...
599½	358⅜	**Schroders**	588½		3.7	17.3
1575½	1038⅜	**St James's Place**	1086½	+ 33	1.7	10.9
2278	1285	**Standard Chart'd**	2201	+ 13	2.3	15.2
932	615	**Standard Life**	925	+ 2	6.0	-196.8
6347½	4186	Sun Life Canada	6161		3.3	...
6⅜	2¼	Tavistock Invs♦	3⅛		3.2	2.6
5200	3615	TBC Bank Grp	4972	+ 160	5.2	6.9
1⅜	0¼	Tern♦	1⅜		...	-1.6
60	40⅛	Time Finance♦	51½	+ 1¼	...	8.1
0⅜	0⅛	Tooru♦	0⅛		...	-1.6
4	1½	Truetide♦	3		...	-5.4
132	77½	Vanquis Banking Gp	79½	+ 2	...	25.0
2800	2000	Volvere♦	2080	- 20	...	11.0
7239½	5453½	Wells Fargo	6444	+ 20	2.3	...
2275½	1609¼	Westpac Bkg Corp	1992½	+ 15⅞	4.0	19.0
31½	23	Worsley Investors	28½		...	...
57550	49947½	Zurich Insurance	56520½	- 36¼	4.9	19.2
Construction & Property						
380	181	Alumasc♦	222½	- 5	5.0	8.6
6⅝	4½	Aseana Properties	4⅞		...	1.2
2½	1¼	Built Cybernetics♦	1½		...	-150.0
900	539	Balfour Beatty	865½	+ 3	1.6	16.5
410½	235½	**Barratt Redrow**	304½	+ 11¼	5.6	22.4
2890	1715	Bellway	2044	+ 56	3.5	15.4
4442	2796	Berkeley	3576	+ 76	...	10.8
1208	800½	Big Yellow Grp	900½	+ 13	5.2	...
460	233	Billington Hldgs♦	412½		2.7	39.7
237	133½	Boot (Henry)	150½	- 1½	5.2	8.6
383½	271½	Breedon	342¼	+ 11¼	4.5	14.1
447¼	318¼	**British Land**	444¾	+ 2¼	5.2	...
2900	2500	Cardiff Property	2750		1.1	20.7
2154	1469½	Derwent London	2120	+ 16	3.8	...
5½	4½	DCI Advisors♦	4⅝		...	-2.7
19½	11	First Property♦	12½	+ ½	2.0	6.9
75	29	Fletcher King♦	37½		6.0	25.3
62	31½	Foxtons Group	38¼	- 1	3.1	8.9
632	407½	Galliford Try Hldgs	595	+ 5	3.4	17.7
401⅜	241	Genuit Group	287	+ 15¾	4.5	15.8
435	221	Gleeson (MJ)	269	- 3	4.1	9.9
1009½	788½	Grafton Grp Units	1000	+ 34¼	3.8	14.2
213	149½	Grainger	173½	- 1⅜	4.9	6.3
377	270	Great Portland Est	353¼	+ 4¼	2.3	0.0
388½	263½	Hammerson	385¾	+ 3¾	4.7	...
191	116½	Harworth Group	131½	+ 1⅜	1.3	45.4
400	225	Heath (Samuel)♦	255		5.1	31.9
241½	180⅝	Helical‡	200	+ 1	1.3	41.4
159⅜	87⅝	Ibstock	96⅝	+ 3¼	3.1	...
161½	112	James Halstead♦	123	+ 3	7.2	12.7
3518	1238	Keller	3050	+ 26	2.3	15.1
6980¼	6843½	Kingspan Group	6681½		0.7	21.1
722	522½	**Land Securities**	713	+ 7½	5.8	...
216¼	175¼	**LondonMetric Prop**	195½	- ¼	6.4	...
25⅝	4¾	Macau Prop Opp Fd	6¼	- ½	...	-0.3
212½	124	Marshalls	168½	+ 6¾	4.0	29.6
113	66	Michelmersh Brick♦	79	+ 2	5.8	19.7
1¼	0⅜	Mindflair♦	0⅜		...	-1.3
5730	3915	Morgan Sindall	4380	- 50	3.7	11.8
10200	8350	Mountview Estates‡	8600	+ 100	6.1	16.5
84	65¼	NewRiver REIT‡	82½	+ 1	8.1	...
234	160	Palace Capital	179¾	- ¼	8.3	39.9
320	261	Panther Securities♦	296		4.1	12.1
1552	947⅜	**Persimmon**	1131	+ 24	5.3	12.7
24	15	Plaza Centers	14½		...	-0.1
109⅝	87⅛	Primary Health Props‡	95¼	+ 1¼	7.6	...
33⅜	28	Real Estate Inv♦	30¾		4.9	-61.4
849½	578¾	Safestore‡	623	+ 7½	4.9	...
1126	791½	Savills	933	+ 13	3.6	17.9
5½	0¼	Secure Prop Dev & Inv♦	0½		...	-0.1
997⅜	603	**Segro**	961	- 4	3.3	...
162⅞	124⅜	Shaftesbury Capital	145¼	+ 1½	3.0	7.8
15¼	6¾	SIG	8¾		...	-1.6
153	105	SigmaRoc♦	126¼	+ 3¼	...	17.3
113	86¼	Sirius Real Estate	100¼	+ 1¾	5.5	7.7
140	106	Smart (J)	112½		2.9	8.6
23¼	15¼	Steppe Cement♦	22		...	19.6
116⅞	74⅝	Taylor Wimpey	80	+ 2	5.2	28.6
140	104	Town Centre	133	+ 2½	3.8	...
723½	493¾	Travis Perkins	573	+ 18½	2.1	-6.9
175	132¼	**Tritax Big Box**	168½	- 1¾	4.9	...
760½	442¼	Unite Group	538½	+ ½	7.0	...
746⅝	220	Vistry Group	315	+ 23¼	...	7.5
434⅛	312	Workspace Group‡	359	+ 8¼	7.3	...
920	730	Wynnstay Props♦	865		3.3	12.0
Consumer Goods						
229	88⅛	AEP Plantations	176	- 4	3.5	10.2
30	17⅜	Alrea♦	27½		3.6	10.8
2359	1729½	**AB Foods**	2123	+ 36	3.0	15.0
715⅞	590	Barr (AG)	645	- 5	2.9	15.3
5326	3677	**British Amer Tob**‡	4466	- 104	5.5	12.7
1376½	976	**Burberry Group**	1207½	+ 20	...	...
181¼	85¼	C&C Group	101¼	- ¾	4.9	...
5⅞	2¾	Capital Metals♦	4¼	- ¼	...	-35.3
460	271	Churchill China♦	380	- 5	5.5	9.6
5195	3270	**Coca-Cola HBC**	4884	- 126	2.1	22.1
1515¾	821	Colefax♦	1480		0.4	10.5
5810	4775	Cranswick‡	5260	- 90	2.1	17.8
2142	1295½	**Diageo**	1655½	+ 21	3.8	21.0
0¼	0	Distil♦	0		...	-0.5
1918	1160	Evans (M.P.)♦	1608	- 18	3.7	10.0
158	114½	Fevara	125½	- 3	1.9	5.4
23540	14070	**Games Workshop**‡	19230	+ 110	3.0	30.8
2185⅞	1028⅜	Glanbia	1975		1.9	36.3
307½	191¾	Greencore	263¼	+ 2¾	1.0	19.9
84	4⅜	Headlam	7⅞	+ ⅜	...	-0.1
861	447⅞	Hilton Food	616	+ 17	5.7	7.0
3632	2626	**Imperial Brands**	2764	- 61	6.0	11.0
7646½	5567⅜	Kerry Group	7010½	+ 34½	1.8	20.5
170	106½	McBride	163¼	+ ¼	1.8	8.4
165	85	Mulberry Group♦	157½		...	-12.1
1315	880	Nichols♦	1055	- 5	3.7	18.0
374	252	Norcros‡	325	+ 9	3.5	...
372	309	Origin Ents♦	366		4.0	8.6
1	0¼	PACSCo♦	0½		...	-0.0
138	47⅜	Portmeirion♦	50		...	-1.1
1½	0½	Provexis♦	1¼		...	-55.0
114	65⅜	PZ Cussons	109¾	- 1⅜	3.3	-79.3
138	87	REA	108	- 1½	...	-207.6
217¼	155	Tandem♦	190	+ 10	1.6	12.3
330	220	The Character Grp♦	307		2.3	-45.5
10	5	Ukrproduct Grp♦	6¼	+ ¼	...	-14.5
5542½	3644	**Unilever**	4770	+ 27	3.4	12.9
111	19½	Victoria♦	65¾	+ ¾	...	-0.2
Engineering						
59⅛	10	Assoc Brit Eng	20		...	-6.9
2230	1458	Avon Technologies	1720	+ 14	1.1	66.3
1527	902⅛	**Babcock**	1146½	+ 25½	0.7	27.2
2360	1529	**BAE Systems**	2143	+ 49	1.8	31.1
1500	500	Braime A N/V♦	1250		1.3	6.6
2285	1376	Braime Group♦	2250		0.7	11.9
550	350	Caffyns‡	400		2.5	-9.8
0½	0⅛	Cap XX Ltd♦	0⅛		...	-3.6
340	202¼	Castings‡	300	+ 7	6.1	17.3
27	12⅜	Checkit♦	18½		...	-7.1
620	446½	Chemring Group	604½	+ 14	1.3	34.0
55	28⅜	Chesterfield Spec Cyl♦	34		...	-37.8
1538	881⅜	Cohort♦	1228	+ 2	1.5	23.5
510	171	Dialight	485	+ 12	...	...
15	5¼	Feedback♦	6		...	-0.2
1270	463⅓	Gooch & Housego♦	1220		1.1	89.1
28500	8480	Goodwin	17720	+ 400	1.6	54.2
4902	3191⅓	**Halma**‡	3548	+ 18	0.7	36.0
3145	1953⅓	Hill & Smith	2910	+ 60	1.8	28.3
2⅝	1	Image Scan♦	2⅜	+ ⅛	...	-11.4
3076	2138	**IMI**	2962	+ 26	1.2	23.8
7000	3480	Judges Sci.♦	4550	- 20	2.5	55.0
90	34	LPA♦	82½	+ 1½	...	-31.2
685	409⅞	**Melrose**	463¼	+ 9	1.6	16.0
251½	167	Morgan Advanced	232½	+ 6½	5.2	31.0
405	200	Mpac♦	322½	- 2½	...	-10.1
1800	1100	MS Int'l♦	1440		1.8	21.4
3318	1682	Oxford Instruments‡	2708	- 24	0.9	32.0
2413⅓	1779½	Phillips Elec	1954⅓	+ 9	3.7	-45.7
4⅛	1	PipeHawk♦	2¼		...	-3.2
5490	2860	Renishaw	5070	+ 122	1.5	44.0
1532⅛	990	**Rolls-Royce**	1506¾	+ 39	0.7	21.7
489¼	286⅛	Rotork	487	+ ¾	1.7	35.3
105	60	SDI Group♦	91		...	19.4
318½	161	Senior	292½	+ 2	0.7	-28.8
2066	2027⅞	SKF Group	2048½		2.9	30.5
2746½	2088	**Smiths**	2648	+ 6	1.8	30.9
215	135	Solid State♦	192	+ ½	1.4	26.7
245	170	Somero Enter♦	235	+ 5	3.2	16.6
8050	5950	**Spirax Group**	7100	+ 155	2.4	32.0
7½	4	Tanfield♦	4	- ¾	...	-3.8
350	240	Thorpe FW♦	253		2.8	11.7
142¾	47	Transense Tech♦	48½		...	5.2
507½	346⅛	Vesuvius	370¾	- ¼	6.4	17.6
710	325	Volex	516	+ 5	0.9	19.7
3580	2254	**Weir**	2638	+ 2	1.6	27.6
2060	825	XP Power	1732	+ 116	...	-41.2
Health						
284½	187	Advanced Medical♦	280		1.0	60.6
12½	5	Allergy Therapeutics♦	5¾	- ¼	...	-6.8
8	0⅛	CellBxHealth♦	1⅜		...	-0.2
580	370	Anpario♦	530		2.4	13.2
15732	9892	**AstraZeneca**	11500	- 1132	2.1	23.4
3¼	1⅝	Cambridge Nutri Sci♦	1¾		...	2.5
259½	193	**Convatec**	225¾	+ 1⅞	2.4	35.3
38	20	Potter & Moore♦	22½		2.4	7.4
116⅜	72	Eco Animal Health♦	100		...	30.7
32	21⅛	EKF Diagnostics♦	25½	- ⅛	...	54.4
13	0⅛	Futura Medical♦	0⅜		...	-0.1
3228¼	1943	Genus	2210	+ 16	1.5	75.4
2282	1288⅛	**GSK**	1909½	- 22	3.7	13.5
0¼	0⅛	Gunsynd♦	0⅛		...	-2.1
416⅛	274⅜	**Haleon**	362¼	- 1	2.0	19.5
1953	1187	Hikma Pharma	1573	- 12	4.0	11.6
274	150½	Hutchmed China♦	175	+ 5	...	4.4
19⅜	1⅜	ImmuPharma♦	3⅞	+ ⅜	...	-10.5
32	12¼	Inspiration Health♦	18½		...	-15.9
15	6½	IXICO♦	8		...	-4.3
1	0⅛	Thalia Therapeutics♦	0⅜		...	-4.0
77⅜	53⅞	NIOX Group♦	61	+ ⅝	2.5	36.1
CHF131.50	91.56	Novartis	CHF124.50	- 2.10	3.0	40.9
962	418	Oxford Biomedica	561	+ 1	...	-20.8
0¾	0⅛	Physiomics♦	0½		...	-2.8
4⅜	1¾	Proteome Sciences♦	1¾		...	-1.7
6522⅜	3664	**Reckitt Benck**	5280	+ 40	4.1	11.3
27	10⅜	RUA Life Sci♦	24		...	-10.0
29	9½	Sareum Holdings♦	23		...	-9.6
1441½	1050	**Smith & Neph**	1197	+ 38½	2.4	22.3
256½	140¼	Spire Healthcare	233	- ½	0.6	56.8
14	5	Talisman Metals♦	6¼		...	1.8
0⅜	0⅛	ValiRx♦	0⅜		...	-0.3
Industrials						
79⅜	58⅛	Accsys Tech♦	71¾	+ ⅝	...	31.5
4780½	3665⅛	BASF	4363¾	+ 43¾	4.4	28.0
4606¾	2164⅜	Bayer	4026⅞	- 96⅝	0.2	-12.8
98⅛	71	Coats Group	81¾	+ 1⅛	3.0	18.5
3338	2426½	**Croda**	3242	+ 37	3.4	73.0
414½	230	Cropper (James)♦	385	+ 5	...	12.5
184	136	Elementis	177¾	+ ¼	1.9	-30.6
110	6¼	Hardide♦	106½	+ 3	...	...
3775	2095	International Paper	3080	+ 25	4.5	-8.0
2434	1730⅛	Johnson Matthey‡	1980	- 12	3.9	-34.6
1085	660	Mondi	895	+ 2¾	1.4	28.0
169⅜	110	Robinson♦	125		4.8	9.2
949½	597	Swire Pacific	928½	- 14⅞	3.9	45.1
13	5½	Symphony Enviro♦	8¼		...	-7.6
124	16¼	Synthomer	89	+ 1	...	-0.9
2858¼	2026½	Takeda Pharma	2523⅞	- 49	3.8	-55.9
819	515	Victrex	796	+ 13	7.5	24.9
430	320	Wynnstay♦	367½	+ 2½	4.9	37.2
479⅞	265	Zotefoams	467	+ 6½	1.7	10.1
Leisure						
451	231	Accesso Tech♦	315	- 4½	...	15.2
260	160	Celtic♦	213		...	6.0
249¼	164	Domino's Pizza	204¾	+ 2¾	5.5	13.5
1022	500⅛	**Entain**	547¾	+ 6	3.6	-5.2
73	19¼	Evoke	44¼	- ¼	...	-0.4
55	29	Gaming Realms♦	31¾	+ 1	...	15.7
310	210	Heavitree♦	300		2.2	5.5
244	130	Heavitree A♦	225		2.9	4.2
$175.70	115.03	**InterCont'l Hotels**	$157.15	- 3.55	1.2	32.0
301½	223½	Mitch & Butlers	283	+ 7	...	9.5
297	129⅜	On The Beach	188⅜	+ ¾	2.1	34.3
164⅜	86	Rank Group	100¼	+ 3¾	2.9	10.5
212½	137½	SSP	206¼	+ 6⅞	2.1	-22.2
0⅜	0⅛	Bow Street Group♦	0⅜		...	-0.3
817	530½	Wetherspoon JD	817	+ 39	1.5	13.6
3302	2098	**Whitbread**	2543	+ 33	3.8	20.6
Media						
76½	51½	Aeorema Comms♦	62		4.3	49.3
29	18	Altitude Group♦	26		...	-104.0
115	70½	Arcontech Group♦	79		5.1	11.2
844⅜	418½	**Autotrader**	530¼	+ 7	2.2	15.5
690	435	Bloomsbury Pub‡	623	+ 12	2.6	18.8
3½		Caledonian Hldgs♦	1⅝		...	-0.1
60	40	Catalyst Media♦	42½		...	23.1
0⅝	0⅛	Catenæ♦	0⅛		...	-3.1
23½	9	Ebiquity♦	9⅜		...	-0.9
785½	262½	Future	312½	+ 6¾	5.4	5.0
154	60⅛	GlobalData	81	+ 1¾	1.9	18.4
110	44	IG Design Group♦	106		0.9	-0.9
1000	719	**Informa**	896⅞	+ 10⅝	2.5	...
87⅜	65½	ITV	73¼	- 1⅛	6.8	12.4
225	98½	ME Group	118	+ 7¼	7.1	7.9
0⅛	0⅛	Mediazest♦	0⅛		...	14.2
27	12	Mission Group♦	18		...	-10.0
220½	139½	Mony Group‡	198¼	+ 1¾	6.4	13.0
2341⅜	1624½	News Corp A	2061¼	+ 3	0.7	...
2606⅞	1891½	News Corp B	2345½	+ 18⅝	0.6	...
439½	217	Next 15 Group♦‡	295½	+ 2	5.2	-9.8
1337	874½	**Pearson**	1249½	- 7½	2.0	24.3
4½	3	Primorus Inv♦	3⅜		...	5.0
75⅛	40½	Reach‡	43¾	- ⅞	13.5	-1.0
59	40	React♦	42½		...	-29.3
3938	1991	**Relx**	2649	+ 42	2.6	23.5
827	393½	Rightmove	471½	+ 6⅞	2.3	16.8
270	131	SpaceandPeople♦	137½		...	6.4
133	95½	STV Group	106½	+ 2½	...	-9.9
470	170½	System1 Group♦	325		1.8	31.2
4398⅛	4270½	21st Cent Fox A	4310⅛		1.0	...
3351⅛	3300½	21st Cent Fox B	3351⅜		1.2	...
369	230	Wilmington	285	- 1	4.1	22.1
410	218½	WPP	304½	+ 5⅝	4.9	6.0
71½	40	Zinc Media♦	56½		...	-5.5
Natural Resources						
0⅛	0	ADM Energy‡	0		...	1.2
17⅞	8½	H-Power♦	10½		...	-4.4
89⅛	36½	Afentra♦	62½	- ⅜	...	-59.7
0	0	Arkadian Strat Metals♦	0		...	-1.2
0¼	0⅛	Allen Metals♦	0⅛		...	-13.2
2⅞	1	Aminex	1¼	+ ⅛	...	-14.6
8924	3342½	Anglo Amer Plat	5509½	- 56½	8.1	20.9
4239	2042	**Anglo Amer**	3705	- 28	0.8	-15.1
435	154½	Anglo Asian Mng♦	385	+ 5	0.8	33.4
4475	1858½	**Antofagasta**	3679	+ 24	1.3	36.7
1¼	0⅛	Arc Minerals♦	0⅛		...	-1.2
2½	1½	Ariana Resources♦	1⅜		...	-143.0
0⅝	0⅛	Arkle Resources♦	0⅛		...	-10.2
2¼	0⅞	Asiamet Resources♦	1½		...	-12.4
1094	440½	Atalaya Mine	879	- 6½	1.1	16.9
4¼	2½	Beacon Energy♦	3		...	-0.7
13	4	Beowulf Mining♦	7		...	-2.1

PRICES

Major indices

New York		
Dow Jones	53178.41	(+693.38)
Nasdaq	25913.90	(+540.04)
S&P 500	7600.50	(+110.78)
Tokyo		
Nikkei 225	63754.90	(-607.12)
Hong Kong		
Hang Seng	26009.40	(+124.97)
Amsterdam		
Amsterdam AEX	1102.22	(+3.04)
Sydney		
Australia AO	9178.40	(+41.40)
Frankfurt		
DAX	26001.31	(+372.07)
Singapore		
Singapore Straits	5612.28	(-16.22)
Brussels		
Brussels BEL20	5667.28	(-18.54)
Paris		
Paris CAC	8613.82	(+104.18)
Zurich		
Zurich SMI	14371.77	(+25.63)
Zurich DJ Euro Stoxx 50	6426.50	(+68.49)
London		
FTSE100	10857.70	(-10.35)
FTSE250	24224.77	(+249.75)
FTSE350	5904.08	(+1.51)
FTSE Eurotop 100	5054.31	(+16.16)
FTSE All Share	5838.26	(+1.79)
FTSE Non Financials	6378.24	(nc)
TechMark Focus	9352.66	(+173.24)
US$	1.3438	(-0.0020)
Euro	1.1670	(-0.0026)
SDR	0.9839	(-0.0026)
CPI Jun (2015=100)	142.5	
RPI Jun (1987=100)	416.5	
RPIX Jun (1987=100)	409.7	

London Financial Futures

	Period	Open	High	Low	Sett	Vol	Open Int
Long Gilt	26-Sep	86.78	87.39	86.68	87.3	198062	1336185
	26-Dec	87.25	87.25	87.25	87.26	121	12
	27-Mar				87.16	0	
3-Mth Sonia Index	26-Jun	96.25	96.2525	96.25	96.25	2200	403147
	26-Sep	96.135	96.155	96.13	96.135	64970	426928
	26-Dec	95.92	95.94	95.915	95.93	91708	536805
	27-Mar	95.77	95.795	95.765	95.79	59417

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
0½	0	Bezant Resources♦	0½		...	9.7
3495	1897½	BHP Group	3096	– 38	3.3	23.4
14	7¾	Border & Sthn Pet♦	10½	– ½	...	-88.3
122½	10½	Bougainville	11¾	+ ½	...	-17.3
609¾	397½	**BP**	552½	– ¾	4.5	...
0	0	Buccaneer Energy♦	0		...	-0.7
8¼	1¾	Cadence Minerals♦	5	+ ⅛	...	-9.6
5½	2¾	Cadogan Energy	3¾		...	-11.2
2900	1250	Caledonia Mining♦	1390		3.0	6.6
3¾	1¾	Caspian Sunrise#	1⅞		...	3.5
244	125¼	Cent Asia Metals♦	146½	– ¾	8.2	-4.6
2¼	1⅜	Chariot Ltd♦	1½		...	...
0	0	Clontarf Energy♦	0		...	-6.3
0½	0¼	Corcel♦	0⅜		...	-2.1
18½	8	Crism Therapeutics♦	9½		...	-1.9
300½	99¼	DRD Gold	155⅝ +	3¼	2.6	13.3
0½	0⅛	ECR Minerals♦	0¼		...	-3.1
0½	0	Empyrean Energy♦	0		...	-0.5
5620	2260	**Endeavour**	3517 –	5	3.8	16.9
28	9¾	EnQuest	23¾ –	⅛	3.4	...
6	2	Eurasia Mining♦	2½		...	16.7
2¾	0½	Europa Oil & Gas♦	1¾ +	⅛	...	-8.9
87¼	27¼	Ferrexpo#	28⅛		...	-4.5
4472	1371	**Fresnillo**	2498 +	23	3.8	17.9
80	3	Galantas Gold♦	20½		...	-5.5
12½	2⅞	GCM Resources♦	3⅝		...	-5.1
7½	2½	Gem Diamonds	3⅜		...	-0.1
3⅜	1⅝	Getech♦	2⅜		...	-6.9
707¼	275¼	**Glencore**	539 –	4	2.3	...
0½	0⅛	Geo Exploration♦	0⅛		...	-4.5
4582¾	1791¾	Gold Fields	2503¼ +	88¾	4.6	...
21	5⅞	Goldplat♦	17¼ –	½	3.0	28.8
2	0¼	Goldstone Res♦	0⅝		...	-0.9
800	230	Greatland Resources♦	520½ +	4½	...	15.7
353¾	176	Griffin Mining♦	298½ +	3½	...	33.2
235	157¼	Gulf Keystone	172 +	1¼	7.4	33.2
858	246¼	Hochschild	440¼ +	8¼	1.0	15.2
553	288½	Hunting	447½ +	4	2.2	23.0
0¼	0	Ironveld♦	0		...	-2.1
219¾	57⅜	ITM Power♦	101¼ –	¼	...	-13.8
5¼	2¼	Jubilee Metals♦	2⅝ –	⅛	...	-3.2
1¼	0⅝	Karel Diamond Res♦	0⅝		...	-3.9
2¼	0½	KEFI Gold and Copper♦	1⅛		...	-9.7
345	178⅜	Kenmare Res	198		...	-0.7
5⅞	1¾	Landore Res♦	1⅞		...	-1.8
0¼	0⅛	Lansdowne Resources♦	0⅛		...	-1.2
4¾	2⅝	Lexington Gold♦	2⅜		...	-29.5
19¼	10½	Metals Exploration♦	12⅝		...	-16.1
0⅞	0¼	Nativo Resources♦	0¼		...	-0.1
4½	1	Nostrum Oil & Gas	4		...	-0.0
0⅝	0⅛	Oriole Resources♦	0⅜		...	-17.0
		Ormonde Mining			...	...
41	10	Orosur Mining♦	14½ –	¼	...	...
190¾	53	Pan African Res	95 +	21¼	2.3	17.8
33¼	6¾	Pantheon Res♦	11⅞ –	¼	...	-42.2
27	12½	Parkmead Group♦	21½		...	3.2
22⅝	5¾	Petra Diamonds	6⅝ +	½	...	-0.2
1⅛	0½	Petrel Resources♦	0⅞		...	-4.0
1⅝	0⅝	Petro Matad♦	1		...	-4.5
9	2¼	Plexus Holdings♦	3⅛		...	-1.2
920	672	Porvair‡	874 +	24	0.8	22.2
5½	2⅛	Prospex Energy♦	2⅜		...	-4.3
5	0⅞	Quadrise♦	1		...	-5.9
160	35	Reabold Resources♦	72½ –	½	...	-106.2
0	0	Red Rock Res♦	0		...	-0.3
10416¼	5370½	Rio Tinto Ltd	8846¾ –	95¾	3.9	16.7
9117	4436½	**Rio Tinto**	7089 –	85	4.9	15.5
0½	0⅛	Rome Resources♦	0⅜		...	-15.4
375	178½	Serabi Gold♦	250		2.0	4.7
302¾	146	Serica Energy♦	232¾ –	2¼	6.9	-24.1
3758½	2553¾	**Shell**	3405½ +	22	4.4	15.1
7	2¼	Shuka Minerals♦	2⅞		...	-2.1
13	1½	Sound Energy♦	1⅝ +	⅛	...	-1.4
27	5½	Star Energy♦	26⅝ +	2⅛	...	-4.8
4½	0⅝	Sunda Energy♦	1½		...	-1.6
0	0	Sunrise Resources♦	0		...	-2.3
0		Synergia Energy♦	0		...	0.4
0¼	0	Tertiary Minerals♦	0⅛		...	-7.0
0⅞	0½	Thor Energy♦	0½		...	-0.6
7066	4293½	Total Eng SE	6534¾ +	⅞	4.6	12.8
0	0	Tower Resources♦	0		...	-0.4
19½	3½	Tullow Oil	14⅞ –	⅜	...	50.0
0	0	UK Oil & Gas♦	0		...	-0.2
13	2⅝	URU Metals♦	4		...	-2.7
0⅝	0⅛	Vast Resources#	0⅛		...	-0.5
9	0½	Westmount Energy♦	3¼		...	-8.4
1½	0½	Xtract Resources♦	1⅝ +	⅛	...	-5.9
4⅜	2¼	Zephyr Energy♦	3½		...	-8.0

Professional & Support Services

4570	2980	4imprint	4278 +	160	4.2	14.2
585	464	Andrews Sykes♦	565		4.6	13.1
130	103½	BTG Consulting♦	108 +	2	4.3	20.4
2832	1981	**Bunzl**	2796 –	6	2.7	19.8
416	215	Capita	266 +	7½	...	-1.8
49¾	23⅛	CEPS♦	40½		...	-11.5
165	90	Christie Group♦	153½ –	2½	2.3	30.2
2581¼	2000	**Compass**	2386¾ +	30½	2.1	29.2
87	64½	Croma Security♦	70 +	2½	3.4	12.2
6740	4188	**DCC Energy**	6365 +	35	3.4	...
34	15	Diales Grp♦	32		4.7	24.6
7720	4970	**Diploma**	7480 +	160	0.8	54.2
800	505	DiscoverIE	774 –	1	1.7	25.6
114½	78⅜	Essentra	106⅜ +	2½	2.0	...
330	110	FIH Group♦	107½ –	25	6.3	-2.6
850	588	Hargreaves Servs♦	806 +	10	5.0	8.6
5850	3519¾	**Intertek**	5840		2.8	26.8
250¼	163½	Int'l Workplace	199½ +	2½	0.5	...
172½	123⅛	Johnson Service	151¾ +	1⅜	3.2	16.3
554	360	Journeo♦	476½		...	19.6
254	178⅜	Kier Group	243 +	3⅜	3.2	19.0
1170	910	Latham (J)♦‡	1035 –	22½	3.5	11.2
3755	2100	London Security♦	3600		2.7	18.6
298	204	LSL Property Servs	244 –	1	4.7	14.7
100½	59⅛	Macfarlane	73½ +	¼	5.0	18.4
200	71¼	Maintel Holdings♦	72½		...	-6.1
28	15¼	Malvern Int'l♦	21		...	-2.6
448½	310	Mears Group	435½ +	4½	4.0	7.8
282¼	101⅜	Michael Page	185¾ +	4	4.6	64.0
214	134⅜	Mitie Group‡	206¾ –	¼	2.2	31.3
15¾	0⅛	MobilityOne#	6¾		...	-2.1
137	71⅜	Newmark Security♦	110		...	15.6
260	170	Norman Broadbent♦	195		...	6.1
158	84⅜	Northern Bear♦	123½ +	6	6.1	4.1
187½	110	NWF Group♦	140 +	½	6.2	7.5
60	42	PCI-PAL♦	56½ +	½	...	...
12½	7	Petards♦	10¼		...	-15.3
12⅞	7	PHSC♦	7¾		...	-2.6
0⅜	0⅛	PowerHouse Energy♦	0¼		...	-3.1
64	41⅜	Record	43¾ –	¾	8.2	11.1
978	772	Renew Holdings♦	907 +	10	2.2	14.7
507	329½	**Rentokil**	356¾ +	12	2.6	25.8
310	222	Restore♦	306 +	8	2.4	-65.1
7	1½	River Global A♦‡	2½		...	-0.3
30	13½	Roebuck Food Group♦	26		...	-9.0
742¾	536½	RS Group	716 +	14½	3.2	20.7
150	85	RTC Group♦	90		7.5	6.4
113½	68	RWS Holdings♦	110½ +	14¼	5.7	-4.1
612	520	Science Group♦	585		1.7	7.8
325¾	205	Serco	240¼ –	1¾	1.9	16.7
79¾	54	Smiths News	72¼ –	¾	7.7	6.2
30	13½	Software Circle♦	16 +	¼	...	-76.2
52½	36	Staffline Group♦	44 +	½	...	11.3
270½	132½	SThree	257 +	1½	5.6	18.8
350	146	Synectics♦	185		2.7	8.4
2	0½	Thruvision Group♦	0⅝		...	-0.6
74	46	Tribal♦	63		2.1	15.0
84¼	58	Vianet♦	66		3.6	46.2
490	294½	ZIGUP	463 +	½	5.8	13.7

Retailing

117⅜	82½	AO World	97⅜ +	⅛	...	15.3
269¼	140	B&M European	228 +	5¾	4.2	14.0
115¾	58½	Card Factory	74⅞ –	⅜	6.7	8.3
1648	1062	CVS Group	1251 –	1	0.7	17.0
204	113	DFS Furniture	143 +	1½	0.7	13.6
1249	707	Dunelm	889 +	19½	7.9	11.5
839½	598	Frasers Group	827½ +	17	...	9.5
2046	1407¼	Greggs	1944 +	64	3.5	16.2
248	123¼	Halfords	243		3.7	16.0
981	713	**Howden Joinery**	805 +	16½	2.7	16.4
895	640½	Inchcape	840 +	1½	4.0	11.6
1⅜	0⅛	Imaging Biometrics	0⅝ +	⅛	...	-4.0
106½	64	**JD Sports**	91 +	1½	1.3	10.5
372½	240½	**Kingfisher**	314¼ +	5¾	3.9	22.4
412¾	301⅜	**Marks & Spencer**	410½ +	5½	1.0	32.3
4	0⅜	Mothercare♦	0⅝ +	⅛	...	0.7
93¼	61⅜	Naked Wines♦	73¾ +	1⅝	...	-8.0
15310	11200	**Next**‡	14900 +	55	1.8	19.6
397⅞	140½	Ocado	216½ +	4¾	...	4.6
241⅜	167½	Pets at Home	214¼ +	3¾	3.5	15.5
575	200	Pinewood Tech Group	427 –	3	...	89.0
695	172½	Saga	679 +	7	...	...
380¼	291⅛	**Sainsbury's**	357 –	2¾	3.8	20.6
1120	378⅜	WH Smith	444¾ +	11	...	-4.0
14	4½	Sosandar♦	13½		...	96.4
510⅜	406⅜	**Tesco**	486½ –	3¾	3.0	17.7
50	30½	Topps Tiles	34¾ –	¾	8.9	11.4

Technology

252	140½	Alfa Financial	163¾		5.9	16.1
307	195	Aptitude Software	198½ +	2½	2.7	27.2
129	55	Bango♦	66½		...	-9.1
20	12	BATM Adv Coms	12¾ +	⅜	...	-4.1
33	19⅜	Berkeley Res	25 –	¾	...	-65.6
3¼	1½	Blackbird♦	1½		...	-2.5
194	74	Celebrus Tech♦‡	109 +	½	3.1	-121.2
28	12½	Cirata♦	15		...	-3.4
0⅜	0⅛	CloudCoCo♦	0⅛		...	0.5
4962	2222	**Computacenter**	4606 +	8	1.6	31.4
286	173½	Concurrent Tech♦	264 –	3½	0.4	45.1
13½	7½	Corero♦	8¼		...	-111.0
2644	988	Craneware♦	1208 +	44	2.8	28.9
110	50	Crimson Tide♦	87½		...	20.8
9¾	5½	CyanConnode Hldgs♦	9¾ +	⅛	...	-8.3
15½	8	Dillistone Group♦	10½ –	¼	...	-7.2
0⅝	0	Forgent♦	0		...	-0.0
165½	94½	FDM Group	115 –	8¼	6.1	22.1
480	114	Filtronic♦	251 +	13	...	39.1
265	180½	GB Group	221½ +	½	2.0	-7.2
51	24	Iliko♦	25½ –	1	...	-6.3
138	56	Ingenta♦	62 +	1½	7.3	5.2
178	73	Intercede♦	112½ +	5½	...	19.7
28½	11⅛	Iomart♦	12 –	⅛	...	-1.5
72⅞	41½	IQE♦	40¾ +	1¾	...	-10.8
4453½	912⅝	LG Electronics	1463¾ –	111½	1.7	...
79	37	MTI Wireless♦	66		3.1	15.2
14½	2	Nanoco Group	2⅝ +	⅛	...	-2.3
138	94½	Netcall♦	118		0.8	48.2
36	22	Northamber♦	24½		2.4	-1.7
60⅝	37½	Oxford Metrics♦	37¾ –	⅜	8.6	-68.7
31	17	Pennant Int'l♦	29½		...	-5.9
447	210	Playtech	375¼ –	3¾	...	0.9
50	33½	Pulsar Group♦	35½		...	-4.5
551½	398½	QinetiQ‡	522 +	16	2.1	26.0
117	88	RM	101½		...	39.0
6½	2½	Seeing Machines♦	4½		...	-11.0
69½	35½	Shearwater Group♦	63½ +	1½	...	-1.6
1998	1083	Softcat	1924 –	6	1.6	28.9
50	5	Sorted Group#	9		...	-0.2
1018½	545	Tele Ericsson	747½ +	15¾	3.1	11.2
1225	771½	**The Sage Grp**	999½ +	26¼	2.2	26.5
91⅜	52½	Touchstar♦‡	85½		3.8	-6.4
435	280	Tracsis♦	342½		0.8	...
400	230	Triad Group‡	390 +	20	2.3	39.3
330	210	Water Intel♦	307 –	½	...	14.4
150	96½	Xaar	120½ +	½	...	-28.0
17	8½	Zoo Digital♦	11½ +	¾	...	-4.1

Telecoms

436¼	203½	**Airtel Africa**	328 –	5	1.6	23.7
242⅜	173	**BT Group**	203¼ +	1¾	4.1	18.5
169½	106	Currys	164¼ –	3½	1.8	10.6
1186	687	Gamma Comms	955 +	19	2.3	13.7
247½	114½	Helios Towers	195½ –	¼	0.9	71.1
0⅜	0⅛	Gana Media♦	0⅛		...	-4.0
1936	638	Telecom Plus	865 +	14	5.8	8.5
131⅜	82	**Vodafone**	117¼ –	⅝	3.4	-83.1

Transport

260	203½	Braemar‡	226 –	2	3.1	31.2
5485	3365	Clarkson	5155 +	425	2.2	24.1
683½	332½	EasyJet	642½ +	12¾	2.1	9.8
240½	152½	FirstGroup‡	185¼ +	¾	3.9	8.7
554	320	Fisher (James)	450 +	7	...	-51.7
492½	332½	**Intl Cons Air**	433½ +	1¾	1.6	7.1
685	458	Irish Cont	677½		2.1	17.0
38⅛	17	Mobico Group	23¾		...	-1.1
7	1½	Sutton Harbour♦	4¼		...	-0.4
1453	832	Wizz Air	1113 +	51	...	...

Utilities

220¼	152	**Centrica**	153¼ –	1¾	3.7	-102.2
937½	613½	Drax Group	715½ –	22	4.2	34.6
485	420	Jersey Electricity	445		4.9	12.4
1428½	1000	**National Grid**	1189 –	1	4.1	18.2
606	439½	Pennon‡	456 –	7	6.4	23.5
3335	2381	**Severn Trent**	3036 +	18	4.2	24.6
2767½	1597	**SSE**‡	2356 +	10	2.9	22.3
1497	1072	**United Utilities**‡	1397 +	14	3.8	16.2

INVESTMENT COMPANIES

12 month High	Low	Company	Price (p)	+/-	Forecast Yld%	P/E
4497	1825	**3i Group**	2867 +	3	2.9	5.3
394½	325	3i Infrastructure	384½ +	4½	3.5	12.0
1758	1408¼	Aberforth Smlr	1710 +	6	2.8	26.7
1366	1178	**Alliance Witan**	1365 +	20	2.1	73.8
395	321	Artemis UK Future Lead‡	389 +	7	4.0	31.4
220	116½	Athelney Trust	165		6.1	14.5
273	235¼	AVI Global	260 +	6½	1.7	51.3
194	154½	AVI Japan	165 +	1	1.3	56.1
331	260	Baillie Gifford Ch Gr	307 +	1	0.8	...
118½	91¼	Baillie Gifford Eur Gr	118½ +	1½	0.6	...
1062	811½	Baillie Gifford Jpn	1052 +	16	1.0	...
168½	123	Baillie Gifford SN	165 +	3¾	0.4	...
225	180½	Baillie Gifford UK Gr	220		2.8	35.3
153⅜	120⅜	Bankers Invstmt Tst‡	149½ +	2¾	1.9	66.4
445	385	BH Macro GBP	416½ –	½	...	19.6
1684	804	Biotech Growth	1588 –	14	...	-835.8
284	197	BlckRck Amer Inc	281 +	2	5.0	99.3
205	116½	BlckRck Eng&Res Inc	175 +	1	3.3	50.0
208	159½	BlckRck Fro Inv	190 +	3	4.0	25.2
625	507	BlackRock Grt Euro	596 +	8	1.2	86.5
238	198	BlckRck Inc&Grth‡	220 –	7	3.5	30.4
288½	230¼	BlckRck Smlr‡	270½ +	1½	2.9	30.9
1072½	543¼	BlckRck Wld Min	883		2.7	36.7
1665	1274	Brown Adv US Sm	1575 –	17½	...	-262.9
1574	1336	Brunner‡	1550 +	12	1.7	55.6
395	312	Caledonia Inv‡	388		2.0	50.4
599	486	City of Lon IT‡	594 +	1	3.7	27.5
155⅜	87	Crystal Amber Fd	89 –	½	-64.5	...
592	439⅜	CT Priv Eq Ord	506 +	6	5.6	...
373	320	CT UK Cap & Inc	356 –	2	3.7	29.3
120	92	CT UK HIT B‡	112½		5.3	23.2
126	97	CT UK HIT‡	116		5.1	23.9
480¼	460	Dunedin Ent‡	475		...	...
860	737½	Edinburgh IT	850 +	6	3.8	32.0
294½	185¼	Edin Wwide	237½ +	5	...	-214.0
957	782	European Opps‡	937		-170.8	...
1332	325¼	**F&C Inv Trust**‡	335 +	3¼	1.3	74.6
672	546	Fidlty Asian Val	590 +	2	3.5	26.2
339	241	Fidelity China Sp	269½ +	1½	3.3	29.2
1574	810	FdityEmrgMkt	1392 +	22	1.4	60.4
442	367½	Fidelity European Trust	431½ +	3	2.3	38.2
469½	372	Fidlty Spec Val	466 +	2½	2.2	37.9
915	706¼	Fins Gvth & Inc	808 +	4	2.5	42.8
84¼	69¼	GCP Infrastructure	83 –	½	8.4	38.6
370	312	Global Opps Tst	331 +	9	3.1	42.4
86⅞	84	Golden Prospect‡	85½		-12.8	...
68½	57½	Greencoat Renew	67¾ +	1	-16.8	...
120⅝	92¼	Greencoat UK Wind	114½ +	2¾	9.3	-13.2
344	250	Hansa Investment Co‡	328 –	8	1.3	74.5
330	244	Hansa Inv Co A‡	316 +	3	1.4	71.8
3470	2630¾	Hbrvest Glbl Pt Eq	3365 +	30	...	-56.6
212½	173½	Hend High Inc	204 –	1	5.5	18.1
966	769	Hend Smlr	954 +	1	3.0	36.5
3290½	2285	Herald Inv Trust	2960 +	10	...	...
524	318½	HgCapital Trust	389 –	1	1.3	...
138⅝	107¼	HICL Infra	138 +	2	6.2	10.0
1611½	1288½	ICG Ent Tr	1432 –	8	2.9	-103.4
494½	379	Impax Env Mkts	429 –	3	1.2	86.8
519	366	Invesco Asia Dragon Tr	489 +	6	3.9	49.7
178½	150½	Invesco Bond Inc‡	170		7.2	13.0
423	318	Invesco Glbl Eq Inc‡	414 +	2	3.9	82.6
1238	1041	JPM American	1220 +	20	0.9	...
652	388½	JPM Asia Gro & Inc‡	562 +	4	5.5	...
313	246½	JPM China‡	273 +	4½	5.0	70.2
982	782½	JPM Claverhs‡	970 –	4	3.8	28.8
310	181¾	JPM Emrg EMEA Sec	240 –	10½	0.2	...
181¼	118⅜	JPM Em Mkts‡	162 +	¼	4.6	70.4
666	548	JPMorgan Euro ♀	629 +	4	2.5	34.6
221	145	JPM Em Mkts Div Inc	202 +	2½	3.0	35.5
623	529¾	JPM GG&I	623 +	14	4.0	75.3
1100	799	JPM India‡	900 +	18	4.9	...
849	633	JPM Japan	808 +	19	1.1	79.6
463	365	JPM Smllr Co	437 +	5	0.7	...
1270	977¾	Law Debenture	1254 +	12	3.0	33.7
187½	141½	Lowland Inv	184 +	1½	3.7	27.3
139	138⅛	Marwyn Val Inv	139		15.3	...
282	234¼	Mercantile IT‡	278 +	1½	3.0	30.1
673	536	Merchants Trust‡	670 +	4	4.4	21.9
804	682	Mid Wynd	780 +	10	1.1	...
1664	1322	Monks Inv Trust	1606 +	28	0.1	...
189	142	Montanaro Eur Sml‡	174½ +	½	0.9	89.9
1034	854⅜	Murray Income Trust	1014 –	6	4.0	26.3
371	283½	Murray Intl‡	370 +	1½	3.4	26.6
437	345	Pacific Assets Trust	406 –	6	1.4	72.5
409	319½	Pantheon Intl	397 +	2	...	-56.6
5095	3636	**Pershing Sqr**	3902 +	94	1.4	3.7
555	507	Personal Assets	548 +	3	1.0	90.9
743½	384	**Polar CapTech**	634½ +	8	...	-755.4
84⅞	63¼	Renewables Infra	77 +	⅞	9.8	-14.3
2645	1906⅛	RIT Cap Ptnr	2600 +	35	1.7	...
990⅜	490	Riverstone	593 +	4	...	-367.8
738	488¾	Schroder TotRt	695 +	5	1.7	70.8
892	585	Schrd Asia Pac	809 +	18	1.6	61.2
376	310	Schrod Inc Gwth	372 +	2	4.0	29.6
401	258	Schrod Jap Gwth	379 +	6	3.2	54.8
776	652	Schrod UKMid‡	748 –	2	3.0	29.9
17¼	12¾	Schroder UK PP Tr	17		...	-70.8
562	480⅛	Scot American	562 +	7	2.9	35.9
1563	1015¾	**Scot Mortgage**	1345½ +	15	0.3	...
87	75½	Sequoia Eco‡	87 +	⅛	7.9	12.7
253	215⅞	STS Glbl Inc Grwth	228 –	1	3.7	35.1
352	196¼	Temp Emg Mkt	307 +	2	1.7	57.0
428	329	Temple Bar	422 +	2½	3.7	30.6
198⅜	162⅜	The Glbl Smaller	191¾		1.6	65.0
9	0⅝	Potentially AI	6⅞		-1.7	...
364½	291	TR Property	320 +	2	5.0	20.2
204	187	UIL	194½		19.2	...
302	239⅜	Utilico Emerging Mkt‡	288 +	1	3.3	21.2
865	682	Vietnam Ent Inv	720 +	17	...	4.7
398	306½	Ww Health	373½ –	2½	0.6	...

◆AIM company; # Price at suspension; ♀ Ex dividend; ‡ Ex scrip; ▲ Ex rights issue; ▼ Ex all; § Ex capital distribution; ☆ figures or report awaited; . . . No significant data. Companies in bold are constituents of the FTSE 100 Index. Investment Cos sector Nav Dis or Prm supplied by ICE Data Services.

Exchange rates

Australia $	1.91929 (-0.00029)
Canada $	1.88624 (-0.0036)
Denmark Kr	8.72495 (-0.01675)
Euro	1.1669 (-0.0022)
Hong Kong $	10.534 (-0.036)
Hungary	424.2 (-2.32)
Indonesia	24096.15 (-142.82)
Israel	4.0973 (-0.0203)
Japan Yen	210.848 (-1.397)
New Zealand $	2.28944 (-0.00469)
Norway Kr	12.8112 (+0.0312)
Poland	5.03081 (-0.00839)
Russia	107.997 (+1.165)
S Africa	22.19064 (-0.08966)
Sweden Kr	12.832 (+0.0047)
Switzerland Fr	1.08895 (+0.00065)
Turkey Lira	63.8457 (-0.2065)
USA $	1.3435 (-0.0045)

Gold/precious metals

(US dollars per ounce)

Bullion: Open $4041.18

Close $4037.06 **High** $4083.14

Low $4019.16

AM $4045.65 **PM** $4028.15

Platinum $1624.1

Silver $57.476

Palladium $1258.623

Money rates %

Base Rates Clearing Banks: 3.75%
ECB Refi 2.40%
Fed Fund 3.5-3.75%
Halifax Mortgage Rate (SVR) 7.24%

Sterling spot and forward rates

Mkt Rates for	Range	Close	1 month	3 month
Copenhagen	8.7253	8.7341	-161.511	-414.715
Euro	1.1669	1.1682	-16.25	-42.2
Montreal	1.8864	1.8898	-28.19	-77.42
New York	1.3435	1.3480	-0.43

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Flight instructor who went into space in her eighties
Wally Funk
Page 44

Register

Obituaries

Rod Liddle

Wittily provocative Sunday Times columnist and radio broadcaster who increased listener figures as editor of the Today programme

In the late 1990s, Rod Liddle desired three things: to become editor of the BBC's *Today* programme, to write a well-reviewed novel, and to have an album in the top 200. "I got two of them," he said. "And I was only that far away with the album. I mean, we recorded it."

Between his pierced ear, untucked shirt and the array of Pulp posters above his desk, Liddle looked more convincing as a rock star than as an editor of *Today*, the heavyweight and — until Liddle arrived — slightly stuffy flagship early-morning news programme on Radio 4. *Today* staff nicknamed him "Rod the Mod", but maverick energy, not to mention a greater commitment to investigative journalism, turned out to be just what they needed: during Liddle's tenure the show's audience grew by 40 per cent.

Liddle's defence of Andrew Gilligan, the journalist he recruited from The Sunday Telegraph and who would go on to break the story of the Blair government's "sexed-up" Iraq weapons of mass destruction dossier, was just one example of Liddle's determination to provide what he termed "jaw-dropping" news. "Insubordination and trouble should be part and parcel of what we do," he said. "I should like to be in trouble more with my bosses."

Liddle's *Today* stewardship came to a sudden end in 2002 after The Daily Telegraph accused him of revealing "blatant bias" in a column he wrote for The Guardian ridiculing Countryside Alliance marches against the government's forthcoming legislation to ban foxhunting. "You may have forgotten why you voted Labour in 1997. But then you catch a glimpse of the forces supporting the Countryside Alliance," Liddle wrote. "Suddenly, rather gloriously, it might be that you remember."

Ironically, Liddle's departure from *Today* came as a blessed relief to much of the left. The Labour Party chairman, Charles Clarke, reportedly described it as "terrific news". Despite voting Labour and writing for The Guardian, Liddle was known for "very un-Guardian sentiments" on issues such as immigration and Northern Ireland. To add to the irony, Charles Moore, the author of the article that torpedoed Liddle's *Today* career, shortly found himself working alongside him at The Spectator.

Liddle was not unemployed for long. His new Spectator column, "Liddle Britain", was accompanied by regular contributions to The Times (from 2003), The Sunday Times (from 2005), The Sun (from 2011), a column in Country Life, appearances on Radio 5 Live and a series of Channel 4 documentaries.

His columns were endlessly intriguing and provocative. He was scathing of Margaret Thatcher but thought clause 28, banning promotion of homosexuality in schools, was "probably right". On immigration his stance was "never, ever to blame the immigrants but to blame the people who allowed them to come here". He claimed that Nelson Mandela's death received too much coverage, suspected that Ukip (now Reform) was secretly pro-immigration, and suggested that viewing internet child sex abuse should be decriminalised. In one Spectator article, he claimed with the blackest of humour that he never would have made it as a teacher because he "could not remotely conceive of not trying to shag the kids".

SHUTTERSTOCK EDITORIAL

Liddle in 2003 and, right, with Alicia Monckton at The Groucho Club. Below, in Edinburgh in 2014

Liddle's detractors labelled him a bigot, racist, misogynist, homophobic attention-seeker. If no one liked the Millwall-supporting Liddle, he didn't care. But plenty of people did like him and defended his function as a professional provocateur who pushed boundaries in the name of satire, entertainment and provoking debate in the best traditions — from Jonathan Swift to Auberon Waugh. "I think one of the damaging things in a democracy is when you have everyone arguing the same thing," he said. "There's usually a rat to be smelt there. And I think that needs to be challenged."

Rod Liddle was born in 1960 in Sidcup, Kent, and grew up in southeast London and Middlesbrough. His father, Ned Liddle, came from a family of train drivers but worked for the Inland Revenue, and his mother worked for the Department of Health and Social Security. Theirs was a traditional, churchgoing family, so his parents were disturbed when their son revealed himself to be a natural agitator.

As a toddler, Liddle was expelled from nursery after fracturing another child's skull with a chair. Later, at Laurence Jackson secondary school in North Yorkshire, he won a school election on a Communist Party ticket, largely, he said, "because I was in the football team and I was gobby and people liked that". Two years later, he joined the Socialist Workers Party and a punk band, pierced his ear, and began buying T-shirts bearing anti-monarchist slogans. "You can't sink any bloody lower, can you," his father said. He found his parents' contempt "thrilling" and wore his punk regalia when canvassing for the Labour Party during the 1983 general election campaign. "I must have singlehandedly lost my party a good 5,000 votes."

After leaving school, and trying to make it big with his punk band, Liddle decided that journalism offered him the best chance of effecting radical change. "How I thought I was going to do that at the South Wales Echo is another matter," he said. He was taken on by its editor after writing him a letter in which he said the paper was "a bit crap" and offered to improve it.

He found Westminster saturated with 'spite and confrontation'

After three years at the Echo, Liddle enrolled in a social psychology degree at the London School of Economics. He paid his way by working as a speechwriter for the Labour Party during what he judged to be "the most unsuccessful period in their history". He found Westminster to be saturated with "spite, confrontation and nastiness". Final proof of this came in 1987, when several Labour colleagues boycotted his leaving party because he had invited some Tories.

Liddle began his broadcasting career as a trainee editor and producer at the BBC, working on *The World Tonight* and *The World at One*, and took up his editorial post on *Today* in 1998. It was at the BBC that Liddle met the journalist Rachel Royce. They had two sons, Tyler (named after Wat Tyler, leader of the 1381 Peasants' Revolt) and Wilder, and married in 2004.

A few months after the wedding, Royce discovered that Liddle's early departure from their honeymoon was not occasioned, as he had claimed, by the demands of the Hutton inquiry, but by his desire to visit Alicia Monckton, a 22-year-old Spectator journalist with whom he was having an affair. As if to make a wider statement on the manifold romantic intrigues that led to the magazine being labelled as "The Sextator" — including Boris Johnson's affair with Petronella Wyatt and the publisher Kimberly Quinn's three-year affair with the Labour cabinet minister David Blunkett — Royce had ten sacks of manure delivered to the Spectator offices. He and Royce finalised their divorce in 2007; he married Monckton in 2008 and they had a daughter, Emmeline. Liddle is survived by his wife and three children.

Unchastened by scrutiny of his personal life, Liddle became the first journalist to have a blog censured by the Press Complaints Commission in 2010 after he made an unsubstantiated claim that the majority of violent crime in London was perpetrated by Afro-Caribbean men. He was accused of racism again after derogatory jokes he had posted on a Millwall FC blog under the moniker "monkeymfc" came to light. The controversies allegedly led to his name being dropped from contention for the editorship of The Independent.

No one and nothing was safe in Liddle's satirical crosshairs, from Welsh nationalists described as "miserable, seaweed munching, sheep-bothering pinch-faced hill-tribes" to the use of amyl nitrate to relax the sphincter muscle being "God's way of telling you that what you are about to do is unnatural and perverse". The one person Liddle felt he actually owed an apology to was Harriet Harman. In an infamous 2009 column about the Labour politician, Liddle wrote: "So — Harriet Harman, then. Would you? I mean after a few beers obviously, not while you were sober." He claimed the piece was intended as a parody of sexism. "I didn't think how it would affect her," he admitted.

After Brexit, Liddle averred that Leavers had been betrayed by the government's half-hearted implementation of Brexit's terms. "Never have so many blameless people in this country been held in such contempt, or been subject to such vilification, by an elite," he wrote in *The Great Betrayal*. This was his first book since 2014's *Selfish, Whining Monkeys*, a collection of complaints about the state of Britain. Driven by his views on Brexit, and his suspension from the Labour Party in 2016, Liddle announced that he had joined the SDP in 2019. He stood for the party in Middlesbrough South and East Cleveland in the 2024 general election and came fourth.

Though he often warned of the threats posed by cancel culture, Liddle's own career seemed to prove that almost any scandal could be seen out with enough wit and an obdurate sense of humour, despite some jokes that went close to (and occasionally straight through) the bone. In a speech at the University of Durham in December 2021, he said: "Colonialism is not remotely the major cause of Africa's problems, just as it is very easy to prove that the educational underachievement of British people of Caribbean descent or African Americans is nothing to do with institutional or structural racism."

In 2025 Liddle made an unexpected return to the airwaves on Times Radio's Saturday morning show. "The first couple of shows were terrifying," he admitted. "Three hours to get through without losing the script, saying 'holy f***' or having a heart attack." Soon, however, he and his producer Danny Garlick got into the rhythm: Liddle focused on breaking the political mould and upsetting "London liberals", while Garlick fielded his more critical listener comments. "He does not forward to me the messages which say: 'Get this interminable arse off air this minute'," Liddle said. "When I ask him how many say that sort of thing, he usually mumbles: "Oh, you know, only one or two ..."

Rod Liddle, journalist and broadcaster, was born on April 1, 1960. He died on August 2, 2026, aged 66, after a short illness

Register

Wally Funk

Member of the 'Mercury 13' female space pioneers who beat the men in tests but had to wait six decades to finally reach orbit

Wally Funk waited six decades for the moment when she could unbuckle her seat belt and float in weightless bliss in a spacecraft 66 miles above Earth. Long after she had dreamt of becoming one of the youngest American astronauts, the white-haired 82-year-old's flight in the Blue Origin vehicle in 2021 made her the oldest person in space.

In 1961 Funk was one of 25 female pilots selected to undergo the same physical and psychological examinations endured two years earlier by Nasa's first astronaut cohort, the Mercury Seven. The space agency accepted only military test pilots, a role which barred women. But Dr Randy Lovelace, the chairman of Nasa's life sciences committee, led a privately funded project to see if women were physically capable of withstanding the rigours of space flight.

At 22, Funk was the youngest candidate. She travelled to Lovelace's clinic in Albuquerque, New Mexico, for a week of invasive and arduous testing that included more than 80 X-rays,

Funk yelled 'woo-hoo!' as she floated out of her seat and somersaulted

pushing a 3ft rubber tube down her throat to measure her stomach acidity, dripping ice-water into her ear to induce vertigo, and half-a-dozen enemas.

She spent 10 hours and 35 minutes floating in a pitch-black sensory-deprivation tank, outperforming male astronauts including John Glenn. One of the key differences between the men and the women, a doctor later observed, was that the women complained less. Ultimately, 19 women attended the clinic and 13 passed Lovelace's tests: a better success rate than the men, who saw 18 passes from 32 candidates.

Yet seven months later the Women in Space programme was scrapped. It was clear that Nasa had no intention of hiring an astronaut from the so-called Mercury 13, who were nicknamed the Flats: First Lady Astronaut Trainees.

Not one to take no for an answer, she made three more unsuccessful applications and continued to take aptitude tests on her own initiative. Though the Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova flew a solo space mission in 1963, Nasa did not select female astronauts until 1978. Sally Ride became the first American woman in space five years later.

The chipper Funk did not abandon hope. "I love challenges, and I like 'em hard," she told a reporter. As commercial spaceflight companies proliferated from the 1990s she made numerous media appearances, capitalising on her Mercury renown and her subsequent career as a pilot, instructor and advocate for women in aviation. In a documentary in 2000 she travelled to Star City in Russia to undergo cosmonaut training. She spent her $200,000 life savings in 2010 on a ticket for a Virgin Galactic flight, but the troubled company did not make its first sub-orbital space tourism flight until 2023.

Funk had been invited to lunch two years before with the Amazon founder, Jeff Bezos, who proposed that she join him on the maiden crewed trip of his New Shepard rocket and capsule, which blasted off from Texas on July 20, 2021. Funk yelled "Woo-hoo!" as she floated out of her seat and somersaulted in mid-air after crossing the theoretical boundary between the planet's atmosphere and the start of outer space during a trip that lasted a little over ten minutes. Funk's geriatric record was short-lived: the then-90-year-old *Star Trek* actor William Shatner boldly went into space on another Blue Origin outing in October 2021. (Ed Dwight, also 90, claimed the record in 2024.)

"I could always beat the guys on what they were doing because I was always stronger and I've always done everything on my own," a beaming Funk told reporters after her flight. "I want to go again, fast. I loved every minute of it. I just wish it had been longer."

ZUMA PRESS/ALAMY

Funk was the first female civilian flight instructor at an American military base

Mary Wallace Funk was born in the New Mexico city of Las Vegas in 1939, to Lozier, who ran five-and-dime general stores, and Virginia (née Shy), whose own flying ambitions were thwarted by her father, a banker who insisted a woman's place was in the home.

The family lived in the mountainous artists' enclave of Taos, where Wally was taught outdoor skills by Native Americans. Aged five she donned a Superman cape and attempted to fly by jumping off the roof of the family's barn and flapping her arms. Fortunately, she had laid hay on the ground to break her fall. She built model aeroplanes, studied aviation at Stephens College in Missouri, earned her pilot's licence aged 17 then enrolled at Oklahoma State University, where she flew small aircraft. She graduated in 1960 and became the first female civilian flight instructor at an American military base. "Flying is freedom," she wrote in her 2020 autobiography, *Higher, Faster, Longer*. "I actually feel like I am closer to God when I am high in the sky."

Funk resolved to become an astronaut after seeing her fellow flying club member, Jerrie Cobb, described as a "potential lady orbiter" in Life magazine. When Nasa spurned the 13, she worked as a pilot, aerial acrobat and instructor across the United States. After taking two-and-a-half years off to drive a Volkswagen camper van on a grand tour of Europe, the Middle East and Africa, in 1971 she became the first woman hired as a Federal Aviation Administration inspector and embraced a new hobby: parachute jumping. She then became the first female fatal accident investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board, which secured her an invitation to a White House brunch with the first lady, Betty Ford. It was sobering work: many accidents were avoidable and sometimes charred bodies were found disturbed by thieves who stole from the victims.

She left the job in 1985, running a flying school and competing in a women's transcontinental air race known as the Powder Puff Derby. Funk collected classic cars, including a Rolls-Royce Silver Wraith once owned by the Queen Mother; she replaced the tyres and the chinchilla fur carpet in the rear. Though averse to wearing seat belts in cars, she gave aviation safety lectures and invented the "Wally Stick", a wooden dowel to help pilots detect propeller cracks from tapping sounds.

She did not marry and left no immediate survivors. Flying, she wrote, was her enduring love: "I often say that I am married to airplanes. I've logged over 19,600 hours of flying." Her living room held two television sets, one of which was always on and permanently tuned to the Nasa channel.

A year after she finally reached space, she was given a lifetime achievement award by the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum, which declared: "Funk embodies the adage of 'never give up on your dreams'." She concurred: "Well, that's right. Why would you ever give up trying to do something you really wanted to do?"

Wally Funk, aviator and astronaut, was born on February 1, 1939. She died of complications from falls and a leg infection on July 8, 2026, aged 87

Juliet Gardiner

Historian of wartime Britain who brought the voices of ordinary people to the fore through her use of anecdotal material

In her memoir *Joining the Dots*, Juliet Gardiner observed that she had felt like an outsider for most of her life. It began when she was adopted by parents who were cold, even callous towards their only daughter, and evolved when aged 17 she married an aspiring Tory MP whose political views differed so dramatically from hers that it was like being "a vicar's wife who does not believe in God". It was only after their divorce that her career as a social historian took off, but it was this very rootlessness that Gardiner believed made her such a natural observer of the lives of others.

She tried to get under the skin of a period by using huge quantities of anecdotal material to tell the stories of ordinary people. It was a quest that took her to far-flung corners of Britain including the Orkneys (according to Gardiner the most heavily defended part of Britain during the Second World War), Cornwall (the least defended), the South Wales Miners Museum and the East Finchley home of a 98-year-old woman who had worked for the Ministry of Food while her husband was fighting and had an affair with her brother-in-law "since everyone had affairs in the Blitz".

Gardiner's books on the Second World War included *The Blitz: The British Under Attack* (2010) and *Wartime: Britain 1939-1945* (2004). "Sixty years after the end of the war," she reflected in the foreword to the latter, "if the 'big picture' of a nation united in courageously facing a common enemy holds steady — as it surely does — so too do the 'short stories', the details of people's varied experiences of war that complicate and nuance that picture."

Exhaustive at 800 pages, *The Thirties: An Intimate History of Britain* — arguably her masterpiece — shed light on a period defined by huge wealth discrepancies by focusing on the lower middle-classes living in a fast-changing suburbia. Gardiner zoomed from consumer trends and escalating political tensions to how poor nutrition meant that, in the 1930s, it was four times as dangerous to bear a child as it was to work down a coalmine.

Gardiner's childhood was a "messy one", she said, "but as a historian I'd expect nothing less". Born Olivia to an unmarried mother in London's East End in 1943, she was taken in at two months old by the Church of England Incorporated Society for Providing Homes for Waifs and Strays after her original adoption plans fell through owing to a severe case of bronchitis. "I not only exist in a personal historical void; I am a void, officially a *filius nullius*," she wrote in her memoir.

At two and a half, she was adopted by Dorothy, known as Dolly, and Charles Wells, an "anxious soul" who worked for the Hemel Hempstead rural district council as a sanitary inspector.

Her relationship with her adoptive parents was strained from the start. Both in their late forties, they were "stuck in their ways, rigid in their routines, uninsured to the noise and tumbling of childhood". Once told she had been adopted, Gillian, as they renamed her, was barred from mentioning it again, and scolded if she did so. She never tracked down her birth mother, though an uncle said that she was probably Italian. "My mother and I were a disappointment to each other," she said. "I was not the daughter she had hoped for."

Much of her childhood was spent "biding my time"; she read voraciously and won a scholarship to the local grammar, where she founded the Labour Club. At home university was discouraged. "My mother was clear that marriage was my destiny, reminding me that everyone knew that men didn't like clever women," she said. "Interviews were arranged for me at various secretarial colleges. I declined to attend."

Aged 16, she ran away and took a job selling lingerie in Brighton, where she met George Gardiner, an Oxbridge-educated politician and later member of the "gang of four" who successfully plotted to replace Edward Heath with Margaret Thatcher as Conservative leader. They married in 1961 and moved to London where Juliet, as she was now known, worked for TV Times.

Gardiner saw her husband, who was never blessed with good looks, as a "stable rock on which to clamber in order to change my life" but being an MP's wife (he was elected in 1974) was a role to which she was unsuited. Conscious of her stunted education, she enrolled at Walbrook College near Waterloo to study A-level history, English and Latin. Of the five mature students, she was the only one with children, and in 1976 was awarded first class honours in history at University College London.

By the end of the decade she had divorced Gardiner and in 1982 was appointed the first female editor of History Today, a "boys' club" magazine which she found "outdated and irrelevant". To make it more democratic, she commissioned pieces about ordinary working men and women, in line with recent historical developments, as well as a special issue on "Blacks in Britain".

As well as her books — the first of which was published in 1992, when she was nearly 50 — Gardiner appeared on a number of programmes for the BBC and Channel 4. She was the historical adviser on the film adaptation of Ian McEwan's *Atonement* in 2007 and ran a history imprint, Juliet Gardiner Books, for Collins & Brown.

In 2012 she was diagnosed with an aggressive malignant brain tumour. She is survived by her three children with George: Alexander, Sebastian and Sophie. Her second husband, the American historian Henry Horwitz, died in 2019.

Gardiner's democratic approach to history extended even to her travel arrangements. In the grey and damp summer of 2010, she bought a red-and-white tent with a cross of St George on one side to pitch at campsites near archives she planned to visit. It "was going cheap after the England football team had been knocked out of the World Cup". Of an evening, she would sit beneath pine trees with a glass of wine, her material spread out in front of her. "Often, realising that the England tent was mine, I was offered a can of lager and a packet of crisps by fellow campers — football fans who thought I was one of them, applauding my loyalty to a defeated side."

Juliet Gardiner, historian, was born on June 24, 1943. She died after living with a long-term brain tumour on June 16, 2026, aged 82

Lives remembered

Donald Legget

Lord Terrington writes: Contrary to that which is said in his obituary (August 1), Donald could and did organise. The result was a lasting legacy for British rowing.

In 1964 the committee of Leander Club asked him to start a cadet training programme. At that time, membership of Leander was limited to those who had already distinguished themselves in rowing elsewhere. The club, therefore, had a large number of excellent oarsmen but produced no new ones of its own. Although it had a long list of winning boats, some members rested on their laurels. The haul of trophies had diminished in the previous 15 years.

Donald seized this opportunity. From 1965 he recruited young oarsmen just as they left school. I was lucky enough to cox the cadet VIII in its first two years. I saw at first hand Donald's organisational skills, from persuading the committee that cadets should be full club members (which some opposed) up to organising every detail of training with the best available coaches.

In 1968 the cadet crew won the Thames Cup at Henley. This was the beginning of a run of successes that continues to the present. Later, women were also recruited to the programme. Many Leander cadets have become elite-level athletes, winning international and Olympic medals. Donald Legget was instrumental in rescuing British rowing from decay.

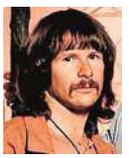
Richard Roberts writes: When I was a nine-year-old schoolboy at Mostyn House School, Parkgate on the Wirral, Donald Legget was tasked with trying to instil Latin into me. I responded by dancing around my desk and he hurled a very heavy Latin/ English dictionary at me. Neither of us bore a grudge.

Alec Synge writes: I was a colleague of Donald Legget when he taught at Mostyn House School. I think he enjoyed it more than he might have let on, not least because of his genuine love of Classics and enthusiasm for athletics coaching.

These two interests coincided dramatically during an inter-school cricket match. Space restrictions meant the boundary line doubled up as part of the 400 metre track, which Donald could use while the two teams were at tea.

However, just as a race set off round the track some visiting parents and pupils returned, creating an obstruction. Donald responded by shouting through his loudhailer, "Get off the f***ing track, you bloody anuses." Unsurprisingly, a startled silence fell over the grounds. This enabled Donald's extra remark to be heard with utmost clarity: "Sorry, Classics, of course I mean ani."

Bill Oddie



David Crigman KC writes: Bill Oddie (obituary, July 27) was a fellow pupil of mine at King Edward's School, Birmingham. On the last day of term, July 1961, when he was leaving to go to Cambridge, he organised a massive prank. A procession came down the long school drive headed by USAF military vehicles and airmen in full uniform from a local US air base. Following were enormous American autos and vintage cars full of pupils. Bringing up the rear was a large van, on top of which a jazz band was in full flow with Bill Oddie leading on the trumpet.

At a given signal, the windows of the adjacent girls' school opened and hundreds of girls joined the absolute mayhem that had now developed. The formidable chief master stood glaring in a cold fury at this chaos, unaware that on the flagpole on the roof behind him some wag had hoisted an old bike and a pair of girl's knickers.

Various steps were taken to punish the organisers, which is another story, but it is said that the chief master wrote upon Bill Oddie's leaving report: "If he thinks he can earn a living by making people laugh he is mistaken". Well done, Bill, you had the last laugh and thanks for all the fun.

Richard Reeve writes: I was a first-year pupil at King Edward's when Bill was starting his final year there. As well as my house captain, he was a prefect, school captain of rugby and a great rugby fly-half, which he put down to being so short that he could duck under most tackles. He also helped two first-year boys, Sherrings we were called, to put on a short comedy sketch at our House Party, perhaps showing where his artistic future lay.

Edward Norman

The Rev Professor Richard Griffiths writes: The various obituaries and tributes to Edward Norman (July 20), while concentrating on his academic and religious views and writings, have not touched on his humour, his warmth and his friendship.

Whether enjoying the bumper cars in Morecambe while preparing his Reith lectures, brilliantly impersonating the voices of academic or religious colleagues, or puncturing pretensions wherever he found them, Edward was always good company and, more importantly, an excellent friend.

▶ If you would like to add a personal view or recollection to a published obituary, you can send your contribution by email to **tributes@thetimes.co.uk**

Readers' Lives

Remembering loved ones

Ruth MacGillivray

Doctor with an interest in women's health and a love of limericks

Ruth MacGillivray, who died aged 94, appeared in The Times on Saturday June 21, 2025

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Births, Marriages and Deaths

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WE always give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. For we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all God's people. Colossians 1.3-4 (GNB)

Bible verses are provided by the Bible Society

Births

ADOURIAN-KELLY on 29th July 2026 to Laura-Jane and Hamish, a daughter, Elodie Elizabeth, sister to Alanna and Annalise. Fortuna et laetitia.

FISHER
on 21st July 2026 to Camilla (née Krefting) and Simon, a daughter, Ophelia Bluebell Krefting. We are delighted to announce the birth of our first child.

Anniversaries

KERSLAKE : DIPPLE
Congratulations Terry and Pamela Kerslake on your Platinum 70th Wedding Anniversary. Amazing! Married 4th August 1957, St John's Bethnal Green. Much love from your proud family.

MEEKS : MEEKS
Mr M. You are the anchor that holds me in place, you are my strength, my happiness and my inspiration. You are my husband, my best friend, I love our happy days together. Most of all, I just love you. Happy Anniversary. Love, Mrs M.

Deaths

BRUCE John. Died peacefully at home on 27th July 2026. Beloved husband, much-loved father and grandpa. Funeral service at Binham Priory on Monday 10th August at 3pm. All inquiries to S. T. Sutton Funeral Directors, 01328 710301, stsutton@northnorfolkfuneralservices.co.uk

CURRIE Brian Murdoch, passed away peacefully on 26th July 2026, aged 91. Loving husband of the late Trixie, a devoted father and a treasured grandfather and great-grandfather. The Service of Thanksgiving will take place at St Michael and All Angels' Church, Bampton, Devon, on Thursday, 13th August 2026 at 2pm. Family flowers only please.

JOHNS Derek Alan, FRSL, died July 24th 2026, aged 78. Literary agent, editor, publisher, writer, counsellor, brother and friend; an adventurer, a peacemaker and a gentleman, respected and beloved.

LAND Ralph Richard OBE, CBE, died peacefully on 23rd July 2026, aged 97, at home. A refugee from Nazi Germany, he was part of LEO's team that pioneered computers, built markets for computers in the Soviet Bloc and was active in trade councils, London Rotary, Reform Club, Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

LANGLEY Charlotte Maria Grace died peacefully on 29th July 2026, aged 64. Burial 7th August at 2.30pm, St Luke's Milland, GU30 7JL.

POWER

Robert Joseph Charles Power passed away on 23rd July 2026, aged 77, in Barnet Hospital after a long illness. Sadly missed by his loving wife Elzbieta, son Simon and partner Carly, grandchildren Charles, Amber, Theodore, Hugo and Adelaide, his brothers Ben, Liam and John, sister Sara, sisters-in-law Aida, Margriet, Audrey and Ann, brothers-in-law Frank and Walter, nieces, nephews, cousins, his extended family of relatives and a wide circle of friends.

TEMPERLEY John Brian, former solicitor, died peacefully on 18th July 2026, aged 96, at Southwell Court Care Home. Loving husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather. Private cremation followed by Service of Thanksgiving at Bleasby Church at 1.30pm on Thursday 20th August. No flowers please but donations to St Mary's Church Bleasby welcome. Inquiries to D. J. Hall Funeral Directors, Verne House, King Street, Southwell, NG25 0EN.

Congratulations

CONGRATULATIONS to David Nunn (son of Martin and Jane Nunn) and Grace Knight (daughter of Edward and Marie Knight) on their engagement.

Legal Notices

NOTICE UNDER SECTION 27 OF THE TRUSTEE ACT 1925

Heal's Pension and Life Assurance Plan ("the Plan") Relevant employers who have been involved with the Plan or the predecessor schemes include: Heal & Son Limited (company number 00926722)

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to Section 27 of the Trustee Act 1925, by Heal's Pension Fund Trustees Limited, in its capacity as trustee of the Plan (the "Trustee"), that the winding-up of the Plan has commenced. If you have already received a communication from the Trustee regarding this matter or if you have already made a claim and received a response, then you do not need to take any action as the Trustee already has details of your claims and entitlements. Any person who has not been contacted by the Trustee regarding the wind-up of the Plan and who believes that they have a claim against or entitlement to a pension or any benefit from the Plan is hereby requested to: Write to: Heal's Pension Fund Trustees Limited (as Trustee of the Heal's Pension and Life Assurance Plan)
c/o Capital Cranfield Pension Trustees Limited
42 New Broad Street
London
England
EC2M 1JD
Or
Email: heals@cctl.co.uk

In order to make a claim, claimants should provide full details of their claim, including their full name, address, date of birth, national insurance number and, if applicable, dates of employment when they, their spouse or a person on whom they were dependant worked for Heal & Son Limited (or any other employer who the claimant believes was involved with the Plan) within two months of the date of publication of this notice. Please clearly quote the Plan's name in all correspondence. All claims must be made on or before 6 October 2026 After this date the Trustee will proceed to wind up the Plan and secure benefits for any remaining beneficiaries, having regard only to the claims and interests of which it has prior notice. The Trustee will not be liable to any person if it has not had prior notice of their claims and demands. Issued on behalf of the Trustee of the Heal's Pension and Life Assurance Plan
4 August 2026

LEGAL, PUBLIC, COMPANY & PARLIAMENTARY NOTICES

To place notices for these sections please call 020 7782 7553

Notices are subject to confirmation and should be received by 11.30am three days prior to insertion

Court Circular

St James's Palace
3rd August, 2026
The Princess Royal, accompanied by Vice-Admiral Sir Tim Laurence, today carried out the following engagements on the Isle of Wight and was received by His Majesty's Lord-Lieutenant (Mrs Susan Sheldon):

Her Royal Highness this morning opened Albany Green, East Cowes, on the occasion of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of Cowes Week.

The Princess Royal, Patron, United Kingdom Sailing Academy, later opened the Victoria Barracks Education Centre, the Esplanade, East Cowes.

In The High Court of Justice
Business and Property Courts of England & Wales: CR-2026-004370
Companies And Insolvency List (CH. D.)
EURO EXCHANGE SECURITIES UK LIMITED
(In Special Administration)
(Company Number 06409565)
TRADING NAME: EURO EXCHANGE SECURITIES UK LIMITED
Registered Office: C/O Teneo Financial Advisory Limited, The Colmore Building, 20 Colmore Circus Queensway, Birmingham, B4 6AT
Principal Former Trading Address: 107 Great Portland Street, London, United Kingdom, W1W 6QG
NOTICE OF RELEVANT FUNDS SOFT BAR DATE IN ACCORDANCE WITH REGULATION 20 OF THE PAYMENT AND ELECTRONIC MONEY INSTITUTION INSOLVENCY REGULATIONS 2021

BAR DATE: 17:00 (BST) on 5 SEPTEMBER 2026

DUNCAN PERRING (IP 021850) AND JAMES BENNETT (IP 020490), of Teneo Financial Advisory Limited, The Colmore Buildings, 20 Colmore Circus Queensway, Birmingham, B4 6AT were appointed as special administrators (the "Joint Special Administrators") of EURO EXCHANGE SECURITIES UK LIMITED (in special administration) (the "Company") on 11 June 2026 pursuant to The Payment and Electronic Money Institution Insolvency Regulations 2021 (as amended) (the "Regulations").

The Joint Special Administrators hereby give notice, in accordance with Regulation 20 of the Regulations, as follows:

1. The Joint Special Administrators consider that it is necessary, in order to expedite the return of relevant funds, to set a soft bar date of 17:00 (BST) on 5 SEPTEMBER 2026 (the "Relevant Funds Soft Bar Date") for the submission of claims for the return of relevant funds (a "Relevant Funds Claim").
2. The Joint Special Administrators consider that the time between publication of this Relevant Funds Soft Bar Date notice, and the Relevant Funds Soft Bar Date, is a reasonable amount of time for customers to be able to calculate and submit their Relevant Funds Claim.
3. This notice will be:
(a) sent to all customers of the Company whose Relevant Funds Claims the Joint Special Administrators are aware of, provided the Joint Special Administrators have a means of contacting them;
(b) sent to all those persons whom the Joint Special Administrators believe have a right to assert a security interest or other entitlement over the asset pool, provided the Joint Special Administrators have a means of contacting them;
(c) placed in the London Gazette;
(d) advertised in The Times;
(e) published on the Administrators' website at *www.ips-docs.com*; and
(f) sent to the FCA.
4. The purpose of the Relevant Funds Soft Bar Date is to allow the Joint Special Administrators to commence the process for assessing submitted Relevant Funds Claims in order to make distributions of relevant funds to customers in accordance with the terms of a Distribution Plan to be prepared by the Joint Special Administrators pursuant to Rule 112(1) of the Payment and Electronic Money Institution Insolvency (England and Wales) Rules 2021 (the "Rules").
5. As soon as reasonably practicable after the Relevant Funds Soft Bar Date, the Joint Special Administrators must make a distribution of relevant funds from the asset pool to persons who are entitled to them under their claims in accordance with Regulation 20(4) of the Regulations.
6. Unless you submit your Relevant Funds Claim prior to the Relevant Funds Soft Bar Date, the Joint Special Administrators will not be able to guarantee that your Relevant Funds Claim will be included in the distribution of relevant funds to be made after the Relevant Funds Soft Bar Date.
7. Subject to Regulation 20(8), once the Joint Special Administrators have returned relevant funds after the Relevant Funds Soft Bar Date, no payment or part of any payment made to any person under the distribution may be recovered for the purpose of meeting a late claim in accordance with Regulation 20(7) of the Regulations.
8. If you believe that you have a Relevant Funds Claim, please return your completed Relevant Funds Claim form to the Joint Special Administrators at *EESUKCustomers@Teneo.com* on or before the Relevant Funds Soft Bar Date. Customer written statements of claim forms may be obtained from: *https://www.ips-docs.com/case/EESUK000111Bn2ACcJSPU*
Customers can also obtain a claim form on request to *EESUKCustomers@teneo.com*
9. If you have been sent this notice, it does not mean that you necessarily have a Relevant Funds Claim or are otherwise entitled to receive a distribution of relevant funds.
10. Any general queries in relation to this notice should be directed to *EESUKCustomers@Teneo.com*. Alternatively the Joint Special Administrators can be contacted at 0121 619 0150. You may wish, however, to consult your own legal and other professional advisers for advice in relation to the scope and effect of this notice.

Duncan Perring and James Bennett (Joint Special Administrators of the Company).
The Joint Special Administrators act as agents of the Company without personal liability.
29 July 2026

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EXCLUSIVE PROMOTION ENDS 8PM 7TH AUGUST 2026

18 NIGHTS DEPARTING 3RD DECEMBER 2026

DECEMBER 2026

Thu 3	**Embark *Arcadia*, exclusively for adults, and depart Southampton**
Mon 7	**Santa Cruz, Tenerife**
Thu 10	**St. Vincent, Cape Verde**
Fri 11	**Praia, Cape Verde** With stunning landscapes, delightful colonial architecture and a mix of cultures, you'll soon discover what makes Praia such a special destination
Mon 14	**Arrecife, Lanzarote**
Tue 15	**Agadir, Morocco** Drenched in sun all year round, flaunted by golden sands and the quiet hums of the busy marketplace that lies behind, Agadir is the laid-back heart of Morocco. Stretching several miles, its famous beach is walled by local holiday apartments and enviable boats bobbing on the calm waters
Wed 16	**Casablanca, Morocco** Casablanca boasts some of Morocco's best architecture with intriguing French-colonial designs merged with the vibrant patterns of traditional Moroccan style. Head to locations like the Grand Theatre de Casablanca for a real taste of local life
Fri 18	**Lisbon, Portugal**
Mon 21	**Arrive in Southampton**

Dates not mentioned are spent relaxing at sea

EXCLUSIVE ROL CRUISE FARES FROM

CABIN	FULL FARE (PP)	SALE FARE (PP)
Inside	~~£1,889~~	**£1,599**
Sea View	~~£2,089~~	**£1,699**
Balcony	~~£2,499~~	**£1,899**
Mini-Suite (1 left)	~~£3,999~~	**£3,899**
Suite		**– SOLD OUT –**

Solo fares are available from **£3,199**

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  - **ON BOARD SPENDING MONEY** of up to **£550*** for all bookings **OR** Coach Transfers
  - **NO TIPPING REQUIRED** on board
  - A range of tantalising restaurants offering culinary masterpieces to informal buffets
  - A choice of pools to relax and unwind in or simply soak up the sun on the spacious deck
  - Take part in one of many on board activities including guest speakers, films, dance lessons and much more
  - The currency on board is pound sterling
- **PLUS**, book a Balcony or above by 8pm 7th August 2026 to receive an **EXCLUSIVE FREE** £25 M&S Gift Card+

EARN EXCLUSIVE CRUISE MILES® worth **£££s** off your next booking††

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Fares and availability correct at time of sign off (03/08/2026). Offer applies to new bookings only. ±Savings are based on two adults sharing. *On board spending money is per cabin and is tiered depending on grade booked. +Gift is based on one per booking, for UK mainland addresses only. ++Subject to the cruise line's T&Cs. ††Cruise Miles® T&Cs apply. P&O Cruises T&Cs apply. E&OE.

Today Showery rain in Scotland. Sunshine and scattered heavy showers elsewhere. Max 32C (90F), min 10C (50F)

Around Britain

Key: b=bright, c=cloud, d=drizzle, pc=partly cloudy du=dull, f=fair, fg=fog, h=hail, m=mist, r=rain, sh=showers, sl=sleet, sn=snow, s=sun, t=thunder *=previous day **=data not available

	Temp C midday yesterday		Rain mm 24 hrs to 5pm yesterday	Sun hr*
Aberdeen	17	D	0.0	2.5
Aberporth	25	PC	1.0	4.4
Anglesey	24	PC	0.2	4.1
Aviemore	14	R	0.4	1.6
Barnstaple	26	C	0.0	**
Bedford	27	S	0.0	**
Belfast	19	C	0.2	2.5
Birmingham	28	S	0.0	**
Bournemouth	26	C	0.0	11.0
Bridlington	22	S	0.0	**
Bristol	28	S	0.0	12.2
Camborne	24	PC	0.0	11.6
Cardiff	24	PC	0.0	12.9
Edinburgh	16	C	2.2	7.8
Eskdalemuir	17	C	1.6	8.8
Glasgow	17	PC	1.2	2.9
Hereford	27	S	0.0	**
Herstmonceux	31	PC	0.0	9.6
Ipswich	28	S	0.0	9.0
Isle of Man	21	PC	0.6	4.9
Isle of Wight	30	S	0.0	**
Jersey	28	S	0.0	11.6
Keswick	23	C	0.8	**
Kinloss	**	**	0.4	5.6
Leeds	23	PC	0.0	**
Lerwick	13	C	0.4	4.0
Leuchars	16	C	1.2	9.7
Lincoln	26	S	0.0	8.8
Liverpool	28	PC	0.0	**
London	30	S	0.0	9.2
Lyneham	29	S	0.0	12.1
Manchester	27	PC	0.0	7.7
Margate	23	S	0.0	12.6
Milford Haven	20	C	1.2	**
Newcastle	18	C	0.4	**
Nottingham	27	S	0.0	9.6
Orkney	16	C	0.0	**
Oxford	30	S	0.0	**
Plymouth	27	S	0.0	**
Portland	24	PC	0.0	**
Scilly, St Mary's	23	PC	0.0	**
Shoreham	32	PC	0.0	10.9
Shrewsbury	27	S	0.0	7.0
Snowdonia	25	S	0.0	**
Southend	24	S	0.0	13.4
South Uist	14	C	0.4	**
Stornoway	15	C	0.0	2.4
Tiree	15	R	0.4	4.8
Whitehaven	20	PC	0.0	6.9
Wick	**	C	0.0	**
Yeovilton	28	PC	0.0	12.2

The world

All readings local midday yesterday

Alicante	34	S	Madeira	26	PC
Amsterdam	26	S	Madrid	32	S
Athens	29	PC	Malaga	30	S
Auckland	**	**	Mallorca	34	S
Bahrain	42	S	Malta	33	PC
Bangkok	32	PC	Melbourne	14	PC
Barbados	30	PC	Mexico City	25	PC
Barcelona	31	PC	Miami	33	B
Beijing	**	**	Milan	28	PC
Beirut	**	**	Mombasa	28	B
Belgrade	34	S	Montreal	26	B
Berlin	24	PC	Moscow	27	S
Bermuda	30	PC	Mumbai	28	M
Bordeaux	34	S	Munich	28	B
Brussels	28	S	Nairobi	21	B
Bucharest	30	S	Naples	32	PC
Budapest	36	S	New Orleans	34	PC
Buenos Aires	**	**	New York	29	B
Cairo	37	S	Nice	30	PC
Calcutta	33	**	Nicosia	35	PC
Canberra	14	PC	Oslo	18	S
Cape Town	23	S	Paris	30	S
Chicago	22	C	Perth	16	PC
Copenhagen	22	PC	Prague	22	B
Corfu	34	S	Reykjavik	16	S
Delhi	34	PC	Riga	21	PC
Dubai	46	S	Rio de Janeiro	26	S
Dublin	18	PC	Riyadh	44	S
Faro	26	S	Rome	33	S
Florence	35	S	San Francisco	23	PC
Frankfurt	29	S	Santiago	8	B
Geneva	31	S	São Paulo	23	S
Gibraltar	31	S	Seoul	32	PC
Helsinki	22	S	Seychelles	29	PC
Hong Kong	27	PC	Singapore	32	PC
Honolulu	**	**	St Petersburg	18	B
Istanbul	30	PC	Stockholm	18	S
Jerusalem	35	S	Sydney	18	PC
Johannesburg	16	S	Tel Aviv	35	S
Kuala Lumpur	34	PC	Tenerife	30	S
Kyiv	**	**	Tokyo	33	PC
Lanzarote	35	S	Vancouver	22	PC
Las Palmas	31	S	Venice	**	**
Lima	21	C	Vienna	26	S
Lisbon	28	S	Warsaw	22	PC
Los Angeles	26	PC	Washington	30	PC
Luxor	42	S	Zurich	**	**

Five days ahead

Changeable with outbreaks of rain and showers. Driest and sunniest in the south

Tomorrow

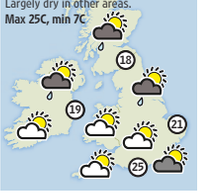
Showers or longer spells of showery rain in northern and western Scotland, the north of Ireland and northwestern England. Sunny spells with the chance of a shower elsewhere.

Max 27C, min 6C

Thursday

Showery rain in northern England and East Anglia. A dry morning in Ireland and western Scotland although rain will push in during the afternoon. Largely dry in other areas.

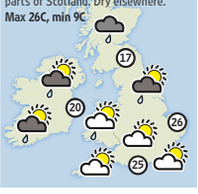
Max 25C, min 7C



Friday

Spells of rain in western Scotland and the Northern Isles. Sunny periods with the chance of a shower in Ireland, northern England, Wales and other parts of Scotland. Dry elsewhere.

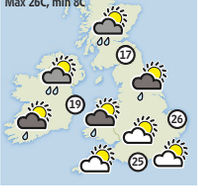
Max 26C, min 9C



Saturday

Outbreaks of rain and showers in Ireland, Wales, northwestern England and Scotland. Dry elsewhere in England with sunny spells.

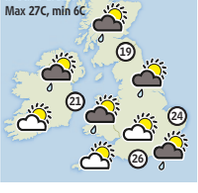
Max 26C, min 8C



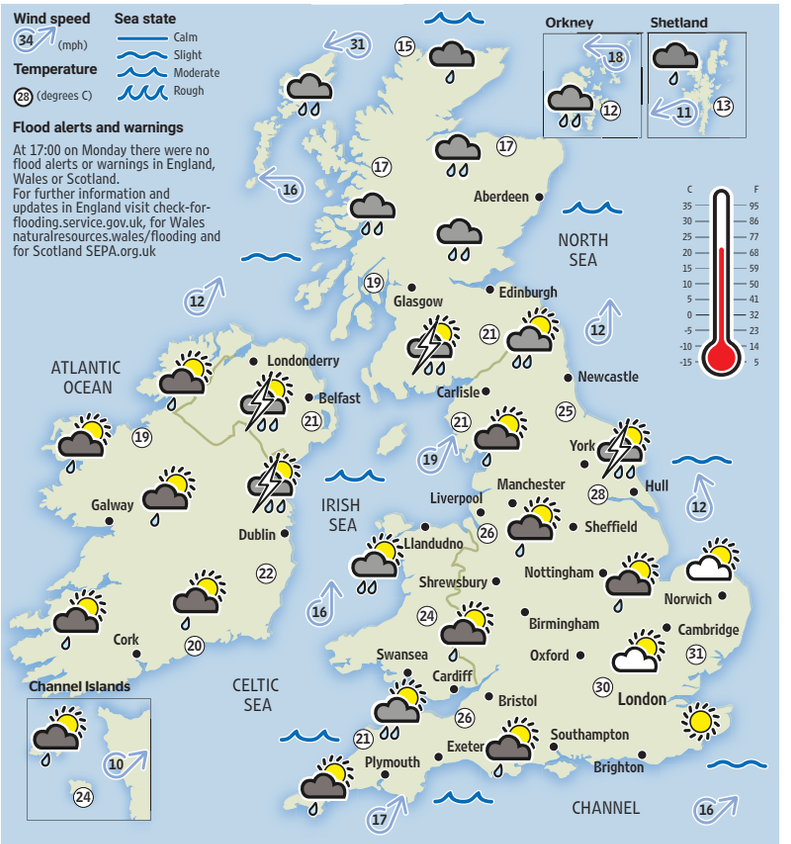
Sunday

Outbreaks of light rain or showers in northern England, Ireland, Wales and southern Scotland. Sunny spells with the chance of an isolated light shower in other areas.

Max 27C, min 6C



The Times weather page is provided by WeatherQuest



Flood alerts and warnings

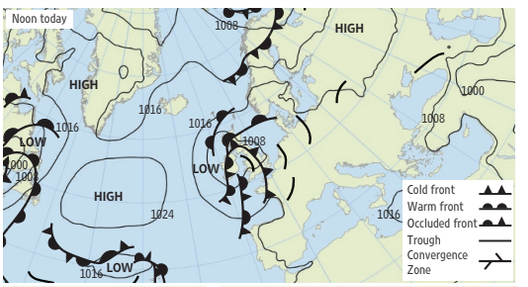
At 17:00 on Monday there were no flood alerts or warnings in England, Wales or Scotland.
For further information and updates in England visit check-for-flooding.service.gov.uk, for Wales naturalresources.wales/flooding and for Scotland SEPA.org.uk

General situation: Heavy and showery rain in central and northern Scotland. Sunny spells and scattered heavy showers elsewhere. Driest in the southeast of England.
London, SE Eng, E Anglia: A hot day with sunny spells and a small chance of an isolated shower. Moderate southwesterly winds. Maximum 32C (90F), minimum 16C (61F).
N Ireland, Republic of Ireland: Sunny intervals and scattered heavy showers, some thundery. Gentle to fresh west or southwesterly winds. Maximum 22C (72F), minimum 10C (50F).
SW Eng, Midlands, Wales, Cen S Eng, NW Eng, Cen N Eng, E Eng, NE Eng, Lake District, IoM, Channel Is: Sunny periods and scattered heavy showers, heaviest in northern England, northern Wales and southwestern England. Light to moderate southwesterly winds. Maximum 30C (86F), minimum 12C (54F).
Cen Highland, Moray Firth, N Isles, NW Scotland, NE Scotland: An overcast day with spells of heavy and showery rain. Moderate to strong east or northeasterly winds. Maximum 20C (68F), minimum 10C (50F).
SW Scotland, Borders, Glasgow, Argyll, Edinburgh and Dundee, Aberdeen: Heavy and showery rain will clear northwards though the morning. Sunny periods with the chance of a few heavy showers in the afternoon. Light to moderate south or southeasterly winds. Maximum 23C (73F), minimum 11C (52F).

Tides

Tidal predictions.
Heights in metres. All times in local time

Today		Ht		Ht
Aberdeen	05:25	4.1	18:06	3.8
Avonmouth	11:32	12.0	23:50	12.0
Belfast	03:04	3.5	15:37	3.2
Cardiff	11:13	11.3	23:32	11.2
Devonport	10:05	4.9	22:14	5.1
Dover	02:57	6.3	15:20	6.5
Dublin	03:36	4.0	16:11	3.7
Falmouth	09:18	4.7	21:34	4.9
Greenock	04:29	3.5	16:55	3.2
Harwich	04:01	3.8	16:00	3.8
Holyhead	02:23	5.4	14:47	5.0
Hull	10:32	7.2	23:03	6.7
Leith	06:46	5.3	19:24	5.0
Liverpool	03:07	9.0	15:29	8.6
London Bridge	06:06	6.6	18:18	6.7
Lowestoft	01:45	2.3	13:45	2.6
Milford Haven	10:29	6.4	22:51	6.5
Morecambe	03:18	9.1	15:41	8.5
Newhaven	03:07	6.2	15:30	6.3
Newquay	09:23	6.2	21:45	6.3
Oban	09:46	3.4	22:17	3.6
Penzance	08:54	5.0	21:15	5.1
Portsmouth	03:25	4.4	16:05	4.4
Shoreham	03:09	5.9	15:34	5.9
Southampton	02:43	4.4	15:33	4.5
Swansea	10:31	8.6	22:50	8.6
Tees	07:47	5.3	20:31	5.0
Weymouth	10:53	1.7	23:07	1.8



Synoptic situation

A cold front followed by a series of troughs and occlusions associated with an area of low pressure centred over the British Isles will bring scattered heavy showers to Ireland, northern and western England, Wales and later to southern Scotland. A warm front will bring cloud and spells of heavy and showery rain to central and northern Scotland.

Highs and lows

24hrs to 5pm yesterday

Warmest: Wiggonholt, 33.2C
Coldest: Altnaharra, 2.4C
Wettest: Lough Fea, Co Londonderry, 5.6mm
Sunniest: Shoeburyness, Essex, 13.4hrs*

Sun and moon

For Greenwich
Sun rises: 05.28
Sun sets: 20.43
Moon rises: 22.25
Moon sets: 13.46 Wed
Third quarter: August 6

Hours of darkness

Aberdeen	21:46-04:44
Belfast	21:49-05:11
Birmingham	21:24-05:04
Cardiff	21:26-05:13
Exeter	21:24-05:17
Glasgow	21:48-04:59
Liverpool	21:32-05:05
London	21:14-05:00
Manchester	21:30-05:01
Newcastle	21:33-04:53
Norwich	21:12-04:50
Penzance	21:30-05:27
Sheffield	21:26-04:59

Weather Eye

Paul Simons

Lord Francis Willoughby led a dangerous life during the English Civil War in the 1600s. Initially on the Parliamentary side, he defected to the Royalists and set sail for Barbados. But when a Royalist force threatened the island he organised an expedition to the "Wild Coast" of Guyana.

There he established a colony, "Willoughbyland" — what is now Suriname — fuelled by rumours of the legendary city of El Dorado full of gold. Even though no gold was found there, the land was fertile and the settlers grew cotton and tobacco and exported valuable hardwoods. The colony also became something of a democracy, offering religious freedom and free trade with the neighbouring French and Dutch colonies. But eventually it degenerated and the colony fell into angry factionalism. An outbreak of disease killed a third of the settlers, and in 1666 the colony went to war with Dutch and French settlements and losses in the fighting further weakened Willoughbyland.

The final blow came when the French seized the English colony of St Kitts. Willoughby gathered a fleet of 17 ships and 2,000 troops to take back St Kitts. But 360 years ago, on August 4, 1666, the fleet arrived at the French colony of Guadeloupe on the way to to St Kitts and, seeing an opportunity to strike back at the French, Willoughby attacked and overran the harbour's fortifications. That night a tremendous hurricane blew up, the walls of the fort collapsed and almost the entire English fleet was wrecked and its crews drowned, including Willoughby. Only two ships survived. It was one of the worst hurricanes recorded in the 17th century, which left Guadeloupe, Martinique and St Kitts decimated.

Eventually, Charles II gave up Willoughbyland to the Dutch and in return they recognised the English claim for their colony called New Amsterdam on the northeast coast of America, which the English had occupied since September 8, 1664. The English later renamed the colony New York.

Speak directly to one of our forecasters on 09065 777675

8am to 5pm daily (calls are charged at £1.55 plus network extras)

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TIMES Holidays

Sport

Jockey Club to split from 'stifling' Racecourse Association

Rob Wright Racing Editor

The way that racing is governed is in a state of flux after the Jockey Club, which owns 15 of the country's biggest tracks, yesterday decided to split from the Racecourse Association (RCA). Ascot announced in May that it would leave the association at the end of the year.

Many of the biggest courses in Britain have become frustrated at a perceived paralysis in the way that the sport is run, particularly with regards to the ability to cut what is generally regarded as a bloated fixture list.

Tracks receive media rights payments for every fixture staged. Many smaller racecourses are unwilling to see a cut in that income stream.

All racing venues in Britain hold equal voting rights under RCA rules, so Chepstow and Sedgefield carry the same weight as Cheltenham and Sandown Park. The RCA has three of the six votes at company level at the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) and can therefore block any proposed changes. As a result, it has become impossible to pass a vote to trim the number of meetings, particularly at the lower end.

The RCA said on Saturday that it would change its structure so that four constituent groups would have 25 per cent each of the votes. They are: the Jockey Club, Arena Racing Company, the Large Independent group — which includes Chester, Newbury, Goodwood and York, and formerly Ascot — and the small independent tracks. That still appears set to result in a voting stalemate, though, and the Jockey Club has decided to leave the association.

The Jockey Club believes changes are overdue. Jim Mullen, its chief executive, said: "The RCA's proposals fail to address our fundamental concern that the RCA can continue to act to stifle the changes needed in the industry. Nothing proposed would displace the RCA as the political representative of racecourses and in our view, the RCA would continue to vote against necessary changes such as the introduction of an independent BHA board and substantive changes to the fixture list."

Catterick
Rob Wright

2.15 Waakabb
2.45 Iconic Times
3.15 Slack Alice (nap)
3.45 Battenburg Belle
4.15 Halimede (nb)
4.45 Doralee

Going: good, good to firm in places
Draw: 5f-1m, low numbers best — **Racing TV**

2.15 Novice Stakes (2-Y-O: £6,804: 7f) (7)

1 (1) **BREAKING THE HABIT** T Easterby 9-7 — **S B Kirrane**
2 (5) 0 **DARRINGTON GOLF** 17 T Easterby 9-7 — **D Fentiman**
3 (2) 6 **NATIONAL PRIDE** 24 W Haggas 9-7 — **C Fallon**
4 (3) 3 **PALACE LEGACY** 19 J Tate 9-7 — **C Beasley**
5 (4) **STORMY WINTER** S bin Suroor 9-7 — **C Lee**
6 (7) 3 **WAAKABB** 21 S & E Crisford 9-7 — **J Hart**
7 (6) **A LA MONTAGNE** Sir M Prescott 9-2 — **L Morris**

11-4 Palace Legacy, 3-1 Waakabb, 7-2 Stormy Winter, 9-2 others.

Rob Wright's choice: Waakabb can build on a promising third at Wolverhampton — **Danger** A La Montagne

2.45 Classified Stakes (£3,664: 7f) (7)

1 (2) 60001 **ICONIC TIMES** 5 (P,D) J Candlish 4-10-0 — **S D Bowen**
2 (6) 50400 **DUE RESPECT** 6 (V,D) Gary Rutherford 4-9-9 — **C Lee**
3 (3) 30450 **RAIN CAP** 9 (V,BF,CD) J Riches 9-9-9 — **E Tindall (5)**
4 (4) -0323 **WAIT FOR IT** 4 (BF) L Bailey 4-9-9 — **B Garritty**
5 (1) 30000 **WITHOUT DELAY** 19 (V,CD) T Waggott 7-9-9 — **C Beasley**
6 (5) 00306 **ZIVA'S STAR** 21 (P) S Whitaker 4-9-9 — **A Elliott**
7 (7) -0035 **OUR HERO MATTY** 21 T Culhane & S Barclay 3-9-3 — **B McHugh**

9-4 Wait For It, 10-3 Iconic Times, 7-2 Our Hero Matty, 11-2 others.

Wright choice: Iconic Times wore cheekpieces for the first time when winning at Wolverhampton **Danger** Wait For It

3.15 Handicap (£4,187: 2m) (9)

1 (2) 0-004 **FREE WORLD** 31 I Williams 5-9-9 — **C Fallon**
2 (8) 0-450 **KARTHALA** J20 (P,T) J Candlish 4-9-9 — **S D Bowen**
3 (7) 32364 **FLEUR DE MER** 26 (V) M Todhunter 6-9-6 — **P Mulrennan**
4 (4) 60365 **ZEPHLYN** J52 (T,CD) Ewan Whillans 7-9-5 — **J Hart**
5 (9) 444-3 **SLACK ALICE** J36 (V) M Bowen 5-8-13 — **L Morris**
6 (6) 00320 **SPEECHMAN** 4 (B,T) P Kirby 6-8-11 — **C Hardie**
7 (5) 26533 **LILLISTAR** 16 (P) M Hammond 6-8-10 — **A Brookes**
8 (3) -2564 **STAR OF JUPITER** 40 (B,E,T) M Loughnane 5-8-9 — **W Pyle**
9 (1) 00-65 **RULER OF THE RIVER** 7 (P,T) P Kirby 6-8-9 — **B McHugh**

11-4 Speechman, 10-3 Fleur De Mer, 7-2 Slack Alice, 6-1 Lillistar, 10-1 others.

Wright choice: Slack Alice has won her past two starts over hurdles; well treated **Dangers** Fleur De Mer, Zephlyn

3.45 Handicap (£4,004: 6f) (8)

1 (2) 6-231 **CAPTAIN CESS** 19 D Carroll 4-9-12 — **Z Wheatley**
2 (1) 10334 **MISS RAINBOW** 11 (V,C,D) T Waggott 5-9-11 — **C Beasley**
3 (8) 02101 **BARMYBLADE** 13 (P,CD) T Easterby 4-9-10 — **S B Kirrane**
4 (7) 10300 **LUCIUS AURELIUS** 20 (C) K Ryan 4-9-10 — **J Nicholls (3)**
5 (4) 14006 **HOWZAK** 13 (D) L Bailey 8-9-10 — **B Garritty**
6 (6) 35622 **CALL GLORY** 14 (D) I Williams 5-9-9 — **T Kiely-Marshall (5)**
7 (5) 00-53 **ENJOY THE NIGHT** 21 S Spencer 3-9-5 — **Shay Farmer (5)**
8 (3) 22153 **BATTENBURG BELLE** 9 (CD) R Menzies 3-9-0 — **J Hart**

3-1 Captain Cess, 10-3 Barmyblade, 7-2 Call Glory, 11-2 others.

Wright choice: Battenburg Belle has been first and second in two starts here **Dangers** Captain Cess, Miss Rainbow

4.15 Handicap (£4,004: 1m 4f) (8)

1 (7) 0-050 **BRUNELLO BREEZE** 146 (P,D) L Bailey 7-10-0 — **B Garritty**
2 (4) 05520 **ON THE BUBBLE** 15 Gary Rutherford 5-9-7 — **C Lee**
3 (8) 000 **HALIMEDE** 47 Sir M Prescott 3-9-6 — **L Morris**
4 (1) -0212 **HANSTEEN** 12 (BF,D) J & S Quinn 3-9-5 — **J Hart**
5 (6) 44332 **MUHIB** 18 Olly Williams 5-9-3 — **W Fentiman (3)**
6 (5) 23053 **PROJECT KINSMAN** 13 (P) P Kirby 3-8-7 — **C Hardie**
7 (3) 05600 **N'TON** 12 I Williams 3-8-6 — **Shay Farmer (5)**
8 (2) 0006 **SPIRIT OF TOKYO** 13 P Kirby 3-8-6 — **A Brookes**

11-8 Hansteen, 5-2 Halimede, 9-2 Muhib, 12-1 Brunello Breeze, Project Kinsman, 14-1 On The Bubble, 25-1 N'ton, 50-1 Spirit Of Tokyo.

Wright choice: Halimede should relish this step up in trip on her handicap debut **Dangers** Muhib, Project Kinsman

4.45 Handicap (£4,004: 5f) (7)

1 (5) 04006 **WITHOUT FLAW** 7 (D) Miss T Jackson 5-9-9 — **W Fentiman (3)**
2 (3) 13655 **BRAIN FREEZE** 8 (V,D) M Dods 3-9-5 — **C Beasley**
3 (1) 60442 **DORALEE** 8 (D) D & N Barron 5-9-3 — **J Hart**
4 (7) 33213 **HAVIN A FLYER** 5 (T,BF,D) R Menzies 3-9-3 — **T Kiely-Marshall (5)**
5 (2) 34600 **GWEN TENNYSON** 11 G Tutty 3-9-2 — **W Pyle**
6 (6) 000 **MIMIME** 14 M Appleby 3-9-1 — **Conor Whiteley (5)**
7 (4) 06036 **DUNNINGTON LAD** 8 (V,CD) P Winks 6-9-1 — **Shay Farmer (5)**

11-8 Doralee, 9-4 Havin A Flyer, 7-1 Dunnington Lad, 10-1 Without Flaw, Brain Freeze, 16-1 Gwen Tennyson, 20-1 Mimime.

Wright choice: Doralee was beaten just a head at Ripon; solid claims off the same mark **Danger** Without Flaw

Ffos Las
Rob Wright

2.30 Newsreader
3.00 First Mate
3.30 Grand Vista
4.00 Kaleidoscope Eyes
4.30 Wootz
5.00 Hurricane Laughter
5.30 Grindleton

Going: good
Draw: no advantage — **Sky Sports Racing**

2.30 Handicap (£4,187: 6f) (7)

1 (1) 41053 **SAFARI DREAM** 20 (P,BF,D) B Millman 6-10-0 — **O Murphy**
2 (5) 6-606 **NEWSREADER** 33 A Carroll 5-9-12 — **Rossa Ryan**
3 (4) -0100 **ESCAPE PLAN** 74 (T,BF,D) T Ward 3-9-10 — **K Shoemark**
4 (7) 21-0 **DIAMONDINTHEDARK** 61 (D) M Loughnane 3-9-9 — **B Loughnane**
5 (3) 0-320 **MONSIEUR PATAT** 36 (BF,D) A Wintle 9-9-9 — **David Egan**
6 (6) 0-005 **THE COFFEE POD** 10 (H,D) W Muir & C Grassick 5-9-6 — **L Edmunds**
7 (2) 60032 **THE FEMININE URGE** 10 (D) G Harris 4-9-1 — **S C Cronin (5)**

9-4 The Feminine Urge, 5-2 Safari Dream, 5-1 Monsieur Patat, 7-1 Newsreader, 8-1 The Coffee Pod, 10-1 Escape Plan, 16-1 Diamondinthedark.

3.00 Novice Stakes (2-Y-O: £7,020: 7f) (7)

1 (2) 21 **PERFECT NATION** 29 (D) G Boughey 9-11 — **B Loughnane**
2 (3) 5 **ARTEMIS STAR** 22 (H) W Muir & C Grassick 9-4 — **L Edmunds**
3 (5) 42 **AVIONICS** 24 A Balding 9-4 — **Ebrahim Nader**
4 (4) 0 **FIRST MATE** 17 E J-Houghton 9-4 — **C Bishop**
5 (1) **GEORGE CROSS** Owen Burrows 9-4 — **C Rodriguez**
6 (7) 5 **MIDGHAM MAN** 36 B Millman 9-4 — **O Murphy**
7 (6) 0 **REVOKED** 18 C Cox 9-4 — **Rossa Ryan**

7-4 Avionics, 5-2 Perfect Nation, 7-2 George Cross, 10-1 First Mate, Artemis Star, 14-1 Midgham Man, 25-1 Revoked.

3.30 Handicap (£3,454: 7f) (9)

1 (8) -4560 **LERWICK** 12 (B,E) M Loughnane 6-10-1 — **B Loughnane**
2 (9) 2-063 **SOFIAN** 7 (CD) Mrs N Evans 4-9-12 — **R Kavanagh (3)**
3 (6) 1-053 **BIRD OF WAR** 40 (BF) C Hills 3-9-10 — **Harry Vigors (5)**
4 (4) 50063 **CYPRIOT DIASPORA** 35 (CD) B Millman 5-9-10 — **O Murphy**
5 (2) 600-5 **OUR DAGGER** 127 (C,D) A Wintle 5-9-9 — **P Dobbs**
6 (5) 00230 **THESTRAL** 27 (P,D) A Carroll 3-9-8 — **Rossa Ryan**
7 (1) 2-600 **LAUGHTERINTHERAIN** 42 E Walker 3-9-7 — **K Shoemark**
8 (3) 60000 **EBN SABT** 34 (P,V) B Lund 3-9-4 — **B Ffrench-Davis (5)**
9 (7) -5030 **GRAND VISTA** 14 (P) W Muir & C Grassick 3-9-1 — **L Edmunds**

13-8 Bird Of War, 3-1 Sofian, 4-1 Cypriot Diaspora, 8-1 Thestral, 12-1 Grand Vista, Laughterintherain, 20-1 Lerwick, 33-1 Our Dagger, 50-1 Ebn Sabt.

4.00 Handicap (£3,454: 7f) (9)

1 (6) 606-0 **MANHATTAN MIRAGE** 60 (H) A Wintle 5-9-13 — **F Marsh**
2 (8) 56223 **ROSEMARY'S ROSE** 22 B Millman 4-9-10 — **O Murphy**
3 (4) 00-44 **VENTURING** 33 A Carroll 3-9-10 — **W Carson**
4 (1) 04-00 **SPECULATIVE** 73 T Dascombe 3-9-10 — **W Cox**
5 (9) 345 **MARCH OF TIME** 14 (H) C Cox 3-9-9 — **Rossa Ryan**
6 (5) 34-50 **PIAZZA** 19 Ollie Sangster 3-9-8 — **T Marquand**
7 (7) 0-043 **KALEIDOSCOPE EYES** 21 (CD) B J Llewellyn & Robert Williams 4-9-6 — **R P Downey**
8 (2) 000 **COSMIC JIVE** 37 E Walker 3-9-4 — **K Shoemark**
9 (3) 50-00 **ICONIC DAWN** 14 (B) H Morrison 3-8-13 — **L Edmunds**

2-1 Rosemary's Rose, 9-4 Kaleidoscope Eyes, 9-2 March Of Time, 13-2 Piazza, 14-1 Cosmic Jive, 16-1 Manhattan Mirage, 25-1 others.

4.30 Maiden Stakes (£5,400: 1m) (8)

1 (1) 0 **STOPHERANDGO** 27 D Flood 9-9-9 — **Jack Doughty**
2 (3) 43340 **ARBAAWY** 25 J Butler 3-9-7 — **B Loughnane**
3 (7) **FLAGBEARER** W Haggas 3-9-7 — **T Marquand**
4 (4) **HERSTMONCEUX** W Muir & C Grassick 3-9-7 — **L Edmunds**
5 (5) 5 **VINCENZO BELLINI** 35 M Loughnane 3-9-7 — **C Hutchinson**
6 (8) **WOOTZ** R Varian 3-9-7 — **R Dawson**
7 (2) 03 **FALLEN LOGIC** 19 G Harris 3-9-2 — **W Carson**
8 (6) 00 **MOUNTAIN OF LIGHT** 54 James Horton 3-9-2 — **O Murphy**

15-8 Arbaawy, 2-1 Flagbearer, Wootz, 16-1 Vincenzo Bellini, 20-1 Mountain Of Light, 25-1 Herstmonceux, 100-1 Fallen Logic, 150-1 Stopherandgo.

5.00 Handicap (3-Y-O: £4,187: 1m) (5)

1 (4) 033 **MYTHOLOGICAL STAR** 29 D & C Kubler 9-9 — **B Loughnane**
2 (1) 46015 **STATION BAR** 35 (D) E J-Houghton 9-4 — **C Bishop**
3 (2) 00-61 **GELATO** 48 (C) A Wintle 9-3 — **F Marsh**
4 (5) 055- **SOMETHINGINTHEAIR** 244 J S Moore 9-0 — **David Egan**
5 (3) 60-54 **HURRICANE LAUGHTER** 19 E Walker 8-13 — **K Shoemark**

15-8 Mythological Star, 2-1 Gelato, 5-1 Station Bar, 6-1 Somethingintheair, 8-1 Hurricane Laughter.

5.30 Handicap (£3,454: 1m 4f) (10)

1 (6) 4-032 **CONDOTTI** 29 (V) H Palmer 4-10-0 — **O Murphy**
2 (10) 10043 **BEAUNE** 14 (P,D) B J Llewellyn & Robert Williams 4-9-11 — **Harry Vigors (5)**
3 (1) 5-252 **JIMMY MARK** 20 (C,D) Zoe Hawkins 6-9-10 — **Rossa Ryan**
4 (8) 60-02 **PRAISE INDEED** 21 W Muir & C Grassick 4-9-7 — **L Edmunds**
5 (2) 3-420 **GRINDLETON** 63 (BF) D & C Kubler 3-9-3 — **T Marquand**
6 (4) 60301 **ADA ROSE** 49 (D) K P De Foy 3-9-1 — **David Egan**
7 (5) 30-00 **POMERIGGIO** 50 Mrs N Evans 5-9-0 — **R Kavanagh (3)**
8 (9) -0005 **HOUNDSWOOD WILLOW** 27 (P) T Dascombe 3-8-13 — **W Cox**
9 (3) 31150 **A DAUGHTERS LOVE** 10 D Flood 3-8-12 — **Jack Doughty**
10 (7) 00-0 **CARTREFLE** 56 (P) E De Giles 3-8-4 — **Molly Gunn (5)**

11-4 Ada Rose, 10-3 Condotti, 7-2 Praise Indeed, Jimmy Mark, 14-1 Grindleton, Houndswood Willow, Beaune, 33-1 A Daughters Love.

Lingfield Park
Rob Wright

5.18 Sub Thirteen
5.48 Langdale Lass
6.18 Minnal
6.48 Just Jump
7.18 Tabasko
7.48 Koko Blue
8.18 Offiah's Boy

Going: aw: standard; turf: good to firm
Draw: no advantage — **Sky Sports Racing**

5.18 Apprentice Handicap (AW: £3978: 7f) (11)

1 (9) 65-25 **SAHANA** 39 (CD) D M Simcock 4-9-12 — **Taryn Langley (3)**
2 (5) 4-562 **MISTER MOJITO** 18 (T,CD) T Kent 5-9-11 — **J Callan**
3 (8) 44232 **ROGUE DYNASTY** 12 (P,D) James Owen 4-9-10 — **Mason Paetel**
4 (2) 22630 **PENFOLDS GRANGE** 19 M Pattinson 4-9-10 — **A Redman (7)**
5 (4) 020-0 **OPTIMATUM** 82 B Millman 4-9-9 — **Charlie Tucker (7)**
6 (3) -4404 **DAISY ROOTS** 36 (C,D) J Boyle 6-9-8 — **D J Murphy (5)**
7 (10) 2-006 **DANCING TERROR** 98 (CD) Stephanie Cassidy 4-9-7 — **Liam Wright**
8 (7) 0-002 **MAJESTIC WAVE** 22 S Dow 4-9-4 — **J Glennon (7)**
9 (1) 35656 **DANDY KHAN** 13 (CD) J Boyle 4-9-2 — **Ashley Lewis**
10 (6) 20032 **SUB THIRTEEN** 27 (P) J Scott 5-8-11 — **O Tubb (3)**
11 (11) 14063 **ASHFORD HILL** 64 (CD) D F Davis 5-8-7 — **Isobelle Chalmers (7)**

3-1 Mister Mojito, 4-1 Sub Thirteen, 9-2 Rogue Dynasty, 6-1 Majestic Wave, 8-1 Sahana, Daisy Roots, 12-1 Penfolds Grange, 14-1 Ashford Hill.

5.48 Maiden Fillies' Stakes (AW: 2-Y-O: £5,940: 7f) (10)

1 (2) 66R **DUN EIDEANN** 45 T Dascombe 9-2 — **P-L Jamin**
2 (1) 04503 **FORTUNATE** 10 E J-Houghton 9-2 — **O Carmichael (7)**
3 (6) 2 **LANGDALE LASS** 20 D M Simcock 9-2 — **J Mitchell**
4 (5) 0 **LUNAR BLOSSOM** 17 W Knight 9-2 — **M Ghiani**
5 (7) **MYSTIC UNICORN** Michael Keady 9-2 — **D Keenan**
6 (10) 0 **POLGARIA** 53 R Teal 9-2 — **H Davies**
7 (9) 006 **SPARKLING JEM** 36 R Cook & J Bridger 9-2 — **Mason Paetel (5)**
8 (4) 0 **STEAMY WONDER** 12 D Cunha 9-2 — **S Donohoe**
9 (3) **WEST TO REST** E Dunlop 9-2 — **R Havlin**
10 (8) 4 **WILD ORCHID** 10 C Johnston 9-2 — **J Callan**

4-7 Langdale Lass, 4-1 Fortunate, 10-1 West To Rest, 12-1 Wild Orchid, 20-1 Dun Eideann, 25-1 Lunar Blossom, Steamy Wonder, Mystic Unicorn.

6.18 Maiden Fillies' Stakes (AW: 2-Y-O: £5,940: 7f) (9)

1 (9) **HIGHLAND GREY** R Teal 9-2 — **J Mitchell**
2 (5) 6252 **JAZZY BLUE** 14 C Fellowes 9-2 — **P Bradley**
3 (1) 532 **LUSHILL** 27 J S Moore 9-2 — **Taylor Fisher**
4 (8) 64 **MINNAL** 26 D M Simcock 9-2 — **M Ghiani**
5 (2) 56 **POTTERS MARGOT** 17 M Crawley 9-2 — **R Havlin**
6 (7) **REVIENS DEMAIN** J Portman 9-2 — **R Hornby**
7 (4) **SILVERELLA** M Tregoning 9-2 — **Jason Watson**
8 (3) 0 **SPEAR OF ARTEMIS** 92 D Cunha 9-2 — **Taryn Langley (5)**
9 (6) **YOU NAME IT** R Hughes 9-2 — **T Heard**

7-4 Jazzy Blue, 5-2 Minnal, 7-2 Lushill, 12-1 Potters Margot, You Name It, 16-1 Highland Grey, 20-1 Reviens Demain, 25-1 Silverella, 66-1 Spear Of Artemis.

6.48 Handicap (AW: £3,245: 6f) (12)

1 (4) 22006 **REPOSADO** 32 D Cunha 4-9-9 — **S Donohoe**
2 (12) -6300 **EXPRESS TRAIN** 33 (D) R Phillips 4-9-7 — **R Havlin**
3 (10) 60531 **STYLE KING** 29 (P,CD) C Dwyer 4-9-7 — **M Ghiani**
4 (7) 00526 **FEDERAL ENVOY** 33 (P,BF) Charlie Clover 5-9-7 — **D Keenan**
5 (2) 31000 **TWILIGHT MADNESS** 18 (P,CD) S Hodgson 8-9-7 — **Charlie Tucker (7)**
6 (1) 50R15 **JUST JUMP** 33 (BF) A Carroll 4-9-6 — **Ashley Lewis (3)**
7 (5) 44050 **HAVANA SKY** 22 (V,CD) E Dunlop 5-9-6 — **Jason Watson**
8 (3) 42300 **PHOENIX MOON** 12 (CD) D Coakley 5-9-5 — **R Hornby**
9 (9) -0640 **BALON D'OR** 26 (P,D) S Dow 5-9-4 — **P Bradley**
10 (8) 32036 **ELVETHAM** 5 (B,CD) C Allen 4-9-2 — **J Gilligan**
11 (11) 00035 **MASTER DANDY** 14 (B,T,CD) Michael Keady 6-9-1 — **H Davies**
12 (6) 60510 **VITALLINE** 30 (B,T,C,D) Kieran Burke 8-8-10 — **Josephine Gordon**

5-2 Style King, 6-1 Just Jump, Federal Envoy, 8-1 Elvetham, Master Dandy, Havana Sky, 10-1 Reposado, 12-1 Balon D'or.

7.18 Handicap (£5,339: 1m 6f) (4)

1 (2) 014-0 **SCARLET MOON** 95 (P,D) A Watson 4-10-2 — **P-L Jamin**
2 (4) -1343 **RUSSIAN RUMOUR** 42 (P,C,D) J Portman 9-10-0 — **O Tubb (5)**
3 (1) -2114 **TARITINO** 10 (D) J Tickle 6-9-13 — **Taylor Fisher**
4 (3) 4-522 **TABASKO** 17 (BF) E Walker 3-8-13 — **Ashley Lewis (3)**

4-5 Tabasko, 2-1 Taritino, 8-1 Russian Rumour, 10-1 Scarlet Moon.

7.48 Handicap (£3,245: 1m 4f) (7)

1 (1) 660/4 **HOPE RISING** 20 J Snowden 5-9-9 — **R Hornby**
2 (5) 00-66 **BOSTON RUN** 19 S Dow 4-9-9 — **P Bradley**
3 (6) 0-332 **KOKO BLUE** 12 Tom Clover 4-9-7 — **J Mitchell**
4 (2) 25014 **GEARING'S POINT** 34 (P,D) Miss S West 8-9-4 — **G Bass**
5 (3) -0055 **DOUGLAS DC** 22 (B) A Carroll 8-9-2 — **M Ghiani**
6 (7) 60406 **PABLO PRINCE** 22 (D) K Jewell 8-9-1 — **R Havlin**
7 (4) -6050 **LAMLASH** 52 J Tickle 4-9-0 — **Taylor Fisher**

13-8 Koko Blue, 5-2 Hope Rising, 3-1 Gearing's Point, 7-1 Douglas Dc, 20-1 Boston Run, Pablo Prince, 66-1 Lamlash.

8.18 Handicap (£3,245: 1m 1f) (6)

1 (6) 30500 **AMBER HONEY** 44 (B,D) P Phelan 4-9-9 — **P Bradley**
2 (4) /0203 **GERT LUSH** 21 (D) R Teal 9-9-7 — **G Mangan**
3 (1) 00562 **OFFIAH'S BOY** 4 (C) J Tickle 5-9-7 — **Taylor Fisher**
4 (3) 20304 **MONKS MEAD** 22 (C) M Usher 5-9-2 — **G Bass**
5 (5) 00-60 **D DAY MAJOR WINTER** 27 (H) James Owen 4-9-1 — **H Davies**
6 (2) 0300 **JUBILEE TIME** 89 (W) M Usher 4-9-1 — **T Heard**

6-4 Offiah's Boy, 13-8 Gert Lush, 5-1 Monks Mead, 10-1 D Day Major Winter, 16-1 Amber Honey, 33-1 Jubilee Time.

Yesterday's racing results

Nottingham

Going: Good to firm (good in places)

2.40 (1m 75yd) 1, **Quisana** (Charles Bishop, 7-1); 2, Moonlit Surf (1-1); 3, Aura Champagne (11-8). 5 ran. NR: Yimmna. nk, 8l. Eve Johnson Houghton.
3.10 (6f 18yd) 1, **Lola De Valence** (Lewis Edmunds, 5-1); 2, Lady Leora (5-6 fav); 3, Harlequin Gift (20-1). 7 ran. 4½l. hd. B R Millman.
3.40 (6f 18yd) 1, **Mobadir** (K Shoemark, 6-5 fav); 2, Leucothea (8-1); 3, Star People (4-1). 7 ran. nk, ½l. E Walker.
4.10 (5f 8yd) 1, **Sergeant Mayer** (Faye McManoman, 15-8); 2, Hurt You Never (7-2); 3, Little Jaybee (5-1). 5 ran. NR: Up The Monk. nk, 27½l. N Tinkler.
4.40 (1m 2f 50yd) 1, **Del Corso** (K Shoemark, 1-2 fav); 2, Sedeirah (3-1); 3, Dawn Of Liberation (6-1). 4 ran. 37½l. 6l. E Walker.
5.10 (1m 75yd) 1, **Venetian Lion** (Tom Marquand, 5-6); 2, Pretty Spirited (20-1); 3, Theme Park (9-4). 5 ran. NR: G'Emmethegreenlite. 2½l, 1¼l. W J Haggas.
Placepot: £16.90 Quadpot: £7.20
Jackpot: £1,831.50

Ripon

Going: Good (good to firm in places)

2.24 (6f) 1, **Reflect On Glory** (C Lee, 7-2); 2, The Mean Fiddler (5-4 fav); 3, War Gaming (7-4). 4 ran. ¾l, 6½l. K R Burke.
2.54 (6f) 1, **All Good** (Tom Kiely-Marshall, 28-1); 2, Royale Union (15-8); 3, Secret Harvest (7-1). 6 ran. sh, 6½l. Miss J A Camacho.
3.24 (5f) 1, **Angel Numbers** (J P Sullivan, 13-8 fav); 2, Marajito (5-1); 3, Creative Queen (7-2). 5 ran. 2½l, 1l. Mrs R Carr.
3.54 (6f) 1, **Lord Roxby** (Alex Jary, 11-4); 2, Dark Cloud Rising (15-8 fav); 3, Commanche Falls (5-1). 7 ran. 17½l, ns. N Tinkler.
4.24 (1m 1f 170yd) 1, **Poet's Dawn** (Sean Kirrane, 2-1); 2, Polygram (7-4 fav); 3, His Finest Hour (12-1). 5 ran. nk, 2½l. T D Easterby.
4.54 (1m) 1, **Amber Hamur** (Connor Beasley, 2-1); 2, Hey Havana (5-2); 3, Vega's Virtue (10-3). 7 ran. NR: Dacres Cross. 17½l, nk. E Bethell.
Placepot: £80.80 Quadpot: £3.90

Windsor

Going: Good to firm

6.00 (1m 3f 99yd) 1, **I'd Go Maniac** (Miss Georgia King, 11-4 fav); 2, Wrist Art (17-2); 3, Jodhpur Blue (6-1). 8 ran. 2¼l, 1½l. A King.
6.30 (6f 12yd) 1, **Star Bayside Boy** (Rob Hornby, 16-1); 2, Rocsane (6-5); 3, Proper Naughty (10-3). 6 ran. NR: Decem Carolinae. nk, nk. M P Tregoning.
7.00 (5f 21yd) 1, **Ardnamurchan** (Nicola Currie, 9-2); 2, Pilgrim's Progress (9-4); 3, Night Shining (4-5). 6 ran. NR: Gris De Chine, Livvys Edge. hd, ¾l. H Candy.
7.30 (6f 12yd) 1, **Saucy Jane** (George Wood, 5-2); 2, Havana Halo (7-2); 3, Lahina Bay (6-4 fav). 5 ran. 27½l, 1¼l. Jack Morland.
8.00 (1m 2f) 1, **Letsbeatsepsis** (Rhys Clutterbuck, 11-4); 2, Freedom Bay (5-1); 3, Panthere Noir (5-2). 11 ran. NR: Tiger Beetle. 1¾l, 1¾l. G & J Moore.
8.30 (1m 31yd) 1, **Flag Carrier** (Oisin Murphy, 9-2); 2, Chilly Breeze (6-5); 3, Havana Club (13-2). 7 ran. NR: Benavente, Dark Rosa. 1¾l, 1½l. Brian Toomey.
Placepot: £30.50 Quadpot: £6.80

Results

Football

Carabao Cup
Preliminary round

York City (0) **0** — **Crawley Town** (1) **2**
Di Biase 24
Orsi 86 pen

Crawley Town travel to Watford in the first round on Saturday

Scottish Premiership

Celtic (0) **1** — **Dundee** (0) **0**
Nygren 52

Cricket

The Hundred: Welsh Fire v Southern Brave
Men

Sophia Gardens (Welsh Fire won toss): Welsh Fire (4pts) beat Southern Brave by 6 wickets

Southern Brave	(balls)
†J L Smith c Salt b Cook	0 (3)
B S McKinney c Salt b Woakes	0 (2)
N Chaudhary c Salt b Cook	18 (23)
M P Stoinis c Ferguson b Cook	55 (39)
T Stubbs b Ravindra	6 (8)
M M Ali b Ravindra	0 (1)
D A Miller c Ferguson b Short	21 (17)
*C J Jordan not out	3 (4)
J C Archer c Jansen b Short	6 (2)
L Wood not out	1 (1)
Extras (w 2, lb 3)	5
Total (8 wkts, 100 balls)	**115**

A U Rashid did not bat.
Fall of wickets 1-1, 2-2, 3-45, 4-61, 5-61, 6-88, 7-108, 8-114.
Bowling Woakes 20-0-15-1; Cook 20-1-14-3; Jansen 20-0-16-0; Ferguson 20-0-27-0; Ravindra 15-0-27-2; Short 5-0-13-2.

Welsh Fire	(balls)
*†P D Salt c Jordan b Archer	4 (6)
M W Short not out	60 (41)
J E Root c McKinney b Jordan	17 (20)
R Ravindra c Archer b Rashid	0 (2)
J M Cox c Jordan b Archer	6 (8)
T Kohler-Cadmore not out	23 (19)
Extras (nb 1, lb 5)	6
Total (4 wkts, 95 balls)	**116**

B I Kellaway, M Jansen, C R Woakes, L H Ferguson and S J Cook did not bat.
Fall of wickets 1-4, 2-60, 3-61, 4-70.
Bowling Wood 15-0-22-0; Archer 20-1-19-2; Stoinis 20-0-30-0; Jordan 20-0-17-1; Rashid 20-0-23-1.

Women

Sophia Gardens (Southern Brave won toss): Welsh Fire (4pts) beat Southern Brave by 4 wickets

Southern Brave	(balls)
M E Bouchier c Kemp b Potts	6 (8)
†L Lee c Wareham b Potts	0 (3)
L Wolvaardt c Wareham b Graham	48 (45)
J J Rodrigues c Wareham b Graham	25 (21)
*S G Molineux run out	12 (11)
J L Grewcock not out	13 (9)
N D Dattani not out	4 (3)
Extras (b 4, lb 4, w 5)	13
Total (5 wkts, 100 balls)	**121**

S Glenn, I E C M Wong, L K Bell and M R Corteen-Coleman did not bat.
Fall of wickets 1-1, 2-9, 3-58, 4-82, 5-116.
Bowling Potts 20-0-14-2; Prendergast 20-0-29-0; Smale 20-0-24-0; Graham 20-0-23-2; Wareham 20-0-23-0.

Welsh Fire	(balls)
G A Vell c Glenn b Corteen-Coleman	11 (9)
E M McCaughan st Lee b Corteen-Coleman	8 (10)
F G Kemp c Bell b Corteen-Coleman	9 (7)
*G L Wareham b Bell	16 (20)
O P Prendergast b Wong	5 (6)
H L Graham not out	35 (28)
G J Thompson c Corteen-Coleman b Wong	16 (12)
N F Holland not out	12 (8)
Extras (w 10)	10
Total (6 wkts, 100 balls)	**122**

†R M Southby, S A E Smale and G E A Potts did not bat.
Fall of wickets 1-24, 2-25, 3-44, 4-49, 5-70, 6-105.
Bowling Bell 20-0-27-1; Molineux 20-0-24-0; Wong 20-0-17-2; Corteen-Coleman 20-0-27-3; Glenn 20-0-27-0.

Men's World Cup League 2 tri-series
Dundee Scotland (1pt) v United Arab Emirates (1pt). Match abandoned without a ball being bowled.

Cycling

Tour de France Femmes
Stage three *Genève to Poligny, 156.5km*
1 J S Y Haugset (Nor; Uno-X Mobility) 4hr 5min 59sec; **2** L Kopecky (Bel; SD Worx-Protime) at 1min 24sec; **3** M Vos (Neth; Visma Lease-a-Bike) at 2min 48 sec; **4** U Ostolaza (Sp; Laboral Kutxa-Fundacion Euskadi); **5** K Le Court Pienaar (Maurit; AG Insurance-Soudal) both same time.
Overall: 1 Haugset 11hr 17min 56sec; **2** Le Court Pienaar at 2min 2sec; **3** D Vollering (Neth; FDJ United-SUEZ) at 2min 6sec.

Golf

US PGA Tour Rocket Classic
Detroit: Leading final scores (US unless stated): **262** M Thorbjornsen 69, 64, 66, 63. **264** X Schauffele 66, 66, 67, 65. **265** D Riley 68, 64, 63, 70. **266** R Hojgaard (Den) 69, 68, 61, 68. **267** M Wallace (Eng) 67, 64, 69, 67; K Ventura (Nor) 68, 66, 65, 68; H Matsuyama (Japan) 67, 68, 68, 64.

Tennis

Mubadala DC Open
Washington: Men: Final (3) T Fritz (US) bt R Jodar (Sp) 7-6(2), 6-4. **Women: Final** A Eala (Phil) bt (1) J Pegula (US) 4-6, 6-4, 6-0.

ATP National Bank Open
Montreal: First round V Kopriva (Cz Rep) leads A Galarneau (Can) 6-4, 2-1; A Kovacevic (US) level with N Borges (Port) 7-6(9), 2-6, 0-0; M Zheng (US) level with M Kecmanovic (Serb) 4-6, 6-4, 0-0.

WTA National Bank Open
Toronto: First round A Korneeva (Russ) bt P Kudermetova (Uzbek) 6-0, 3-0 ret; K Pliskova (Cz Rep) bt O Oliynykova (Ukr) 6-4, 6-4; T Gibson (Aus) bt E Cocciaretto (It) 6-2, 3-2 ret; A Bondar (Hun) bt A Kalinina (Ukr) 6-4, 7-5; K Day (US) bt D Parry (Fr) 3-6, 6-3, 7-5; M Kessler (US) bt C Brace (Can) 6-3, 6-3; K Cross (Can) bt K Boulter (GB) 7-6(3), 7-5; R Sramkova (Slvk) bt A Blinkova (Russ) 6-3, 6-3; Zhang S (China) bt Y Putintseva (Kazakh) 6-4

Aussies' faith in older stars offers hope to England

RYAN PIERSE/GETTY IMAGES

Left to right: Starc, Hazlewood, Lyon and Cummins are all on course to play in next summer's Ashes, as is Green, below

Steve James

It could easily have been Brendon McCullum justifying Zak Crawley's presence at the top of the order, with Crawley's contrasting partnership with Ben Duckett often producing more than mere individual numbers suggested, but instead it was Australia's chairman of selectors, George Bailey, talking recently about the selection of their opener, Jake Weatherald.

"There were moments in that Ashes series where we liked the combination of what Jake and Travis [Head] were able to bring and what that looked like as a collective," Bailey said. "And then also, individually, what Jake at his best looked like within that series. Hopefully we do see some growth out of that and some understanding of what it takes for success at Test level."

Weatherald averaged 22.33 in the Ashes last winter in which he made his Test debut, and is 31 years old. Crawley is 28 and averaged 27.30 in that series, but has since been dropped and denounced as representing the worst of Bazball's excesses.

Now, this is not to call for Crawley's return, because he may even soon retire from red-ball cricket, given his absence from Kent's most recent County Championship matches. But watching him on Tuesday bat and captain so excellently for SunRisers Leeds in the Hundred was a reminder of his talents — as well as evidence in a superb partnership with Harry Brook, against an attack comprising Gus Atkinson, Sonny Baker and Josh Tongue, of the quality of player on show in that competition this year.

Instead this is a nod to two things: what might have been last winter against an Australia side that will never dine with the gods of the past, and what might be in the future. Weatherald is a decent player who averaged 60 for Leicestershire in the championship this year, but if he is Australia's future then perhaps we should not be catastrophising quite as much about the state of the Test team on these shores. He is certainly no better than Crawley's replacement, Emilio Gay, and Gay has hardly looked like a 50-cap Test opener so far.

What's more, Bailey was talking at the announcement of the squad to face Bangladesh in two home Tests in Darwin and Mackay. Given this is a Bangladesh team who lost their previous Test in late June by an innings to the might of Zimbabwe, it was striking that Australia are rolling out their Dad's Army in a 13-man squad containing a 38-year-old Nathan Lyon and two 37-year-olds in Steve Smith and Scott Boland as well as Mitchell Starc, 36, and Josh Hazlewood, 35.

Weatherald is a veritable spring chicken, as is Josh Inglis, also 31, alongside Alex Carey, 34, Pat Cummins, 33, and Marnus Labuschagne, Head and Beau Webster, all 32. Cameron Green is almost from another generation at 27.

Australia have often prided themselves on possessing the courage to pick players late in their careers and have been rewarded by the likes of Michael Hussey, Chris Rogers and Adam Voges flourishing when there was doubtless some grey in their beards, but still ...

Yes, yes, of course this group of senior statesmen, with Boland and Michael Neser, 36, providing more than adequate cover for the injured quicks, were way too good last winter for England, whose plight has only plummeted since (even if the white-ball team have been winning), leaving them searching for both a Test coach and captain until very recently.

But the question of age is not a new concern down under. Even before the Ashes began the legendary Steve Waugh was criticising Bailey for lacking the "appetite" to make "the tough calls", to which Bailey replied: "My question back, is there a tipping number [that] once a player hits an age you move them on?"

Well, England decided that James Anderson had reached his tipping number (41) and moved him on. There were many opponents to that, and to some the Ashes defeat was used as vindication of a misguided decision, but perhaps we are yet to see the full fruits of the rebuilding of a pace attack without Anderson and Stuart Broad.

All roads were supposed to lead to that Ashes last winter, and England undoubtedly misjudged the surfaces in their pursuit of all-out pace, but maybe it will be next summer with the visit of Australia that we see the very best of Jofra Archer, Atkinson and Tongue, with some useful back-up in the likes of Baker, Brydon Carse and Ollie Robinson, and probably Sam Curran as Ben Stokes' replacement.

What we can be pretty sure of is that we will be seeing mostly the same, senescent names in Australian shirts. A headline in The Age read "A generation lost? The risky game being played by our Test selectors" under which Daniel Brettig wrote: "There are sensible arguments for reconvening the frontline Test team ahead of 12 unrelenting months of series against South Africa, New Zealand, India and England. But the prospect of playing an XI with only one player under the age of 30, against a Bangladesh side that just lost a Test by an innings to Zimbabwe, is an unsettling one."

It is fairly obvious what is happening here. Australia last won a Test series in India in 2004, and in England in 2001, and the selectors are hoping to keep their ageing band together for one last string of tours to break those ducks. They have selected some youngsters such as Sam Konstas, 20, and Campbell Kellaway, 23, in a Cricket Australia invitational side to face Bangladesh before the series but even that team includes the 33-year-old Kurtis Patterson. When players such as Konstas have been tried at Test level, they have been found wanting. The future can wait.

The visits to India and England in 2023 were huge missed opportunities, losing 2-1 in India and drawing 2-2 over here. As Bailey said about those series: "Always another chance, isn't it? No two series will be the same, but there'll be moments out of those series where they'll look back and wish that things could have gone differently, but there'll also be great things that they would have learnt out of that. I know everyone fixates on the age, but in terms of the actual growth of the guys, the athletes, they constantly want to learn."

But Cummins, Hazlewood and Lyon have all had injuries. Then, alongside Weatherald's underwhelming start to Test cricket, Labuschagne has not made a century in 21 Tests, averaging just 25.75, and, to be frank, Green has been a massive disappointment as a Test all-rounder.

In contrast England have at least been attempting to regenerate. Only returning captain Joe Root remains from their first Bazball team in 2022 and in their most recent Test they fielded seven players aged under 30, with one of the veterans, Stokes, now gone too.

All joshing aside, Bailey is right that there is no fixed age when retirement should happen, and his bowlers in particular are so good — and nowhere near Anderson's age when he was tapped on the shoulder — that it would be madness to rush them into their slippers. But the Ashes is still some considerable distance away and, even if all the old-timers make it that far, a repeat of the mass retirements of the legends in 2007 (Shane Warne, Glenn McGrath, Justin Langer and Damien Martyn) is almost inevitable.

Australia are top of the Test rankings, while England are fifth, but they are teams at very different stages of their development and perhaps not as far apart as recent events have suggested. March's 150th anniversary Test in Melbourne might tell us more, but the Ashes next year, with Stephen Fleming looking a shrewd choice as England coach, may not be the distant car crash so many expect.

English rookie Rhodes among Europe's Solheim Cup wild-card picks

Golf

Cathy Harris

England's Mimi Rhodes will make her Solheim Cup debut after being named as one of four wild-card picks by the Team Europe captain Anna Nordqvist.

Rhodes, 24, joined compatriots Charley Hull and Lottie Woad in the final line-up to face the USA at Bernardus Golf Club in the Netherlands in September. Ireland's Leona Maguire was also named as one of Nordqvist's four picks alongside the rookies Julia López Ramírez and Nastasia Nadaud.

Woad, the world No 5, has been a professional for little over a year and the 22-year-old is also making her debut in the team event. Hull, 30, is set to make her eighth Solheim Cup appearance, having played in every edition since 2013, and looks likely to be a key player. Maguire, 31, crowned a superb debut in 2021 by top-scoring as an undefeated rookie before making further appearances in 2023 and 2024.

"It's been quite a stressful couple of weeks but it's so exciting to know the buzz out there," Nordqvist said. "I've lived in this bubble for the past 18 months and it's been a big milestone finalising the team."

The Swede, a veteran of nine Solheim Cups and a three-times major winner, admitted it was hard keeping everyone's dreams alive as long as she could.

"We have four rookies — the most we've had in a while — but they're not playing like rookies," she added. "They will bring great attitude and positivity."

Spain's López Ramírez, 23, is a Mississippi State University graduate and renowned long hitter. She is a close friend of Rhodes, who starred for GB & Ireland in their 2024 Curtis Cup victory at Sunningdale. The Frenchwoman Nadaud is the youngest in the team at 21 years old. Nordqvist described her as "very steady in this year's majors, aggressive and a player who can make a ton of birdies".

This is the first Europe team since 2015 not to feature Georgia Hall, as she searches for her best form after giving birth in February. There is also no place for Switzerland's Chiara Tamburlini and Germany's Helen Briem, who were close to automatic selection through the Ladies European Tour rankings. Sara Kouskova, the Czech who rose up the leaderboard on the final day of the AIG Women's Open at Royal Lytham & St Annes, is also unlucky to miss out.

The qualifying period for the USA team concludes at the Canadian Women's Open in Edmonton in three weeks' time. Two players, Angel Yin and Jennifer Kupcho, clinched their spots at the Open, joining the world No 1, Nelly Korda, in the line-up.

Team Europe Charley Hull (Eng), Esther Henseleit (Ger), Lottie Woad (Eng), Maja Stark (Swe), Céline Boutier (Fr), Carlota Ciganda (Sp), Linn Grant (Swe), Nanna Koerstz Madsen (Den), Leona Maguire (Ire), Julia López Ramírez (Sp), Nastasia Nadaud (Fra), Mimi Rhodes (Eng).

TERESA SUAREZ/EPA

Pogacar bids to keep the momentum going after a record-equalling fifth Tour win

Pogacar to ride La Vuelta as he targets clean sweep

Sean Russell

If you were going to design a grand tour to attract Tadej Pogacar you would probably start it in Monaco, where he lives with his partner, Urska Zigart.

You would have only three or four flat stages and there would be plenty of mountains. You would finish in the Sierra Nevada, where he trains at altitude with his team-mates. You would design La Vuelta 2026, basically. And it appears to have worked. UAE Team Emirates-XRG announced yesterday that Pogacar, the five-times Tour de France winner, would race La Vuelta for the first time since he made his grand-tour debut in the race in 2019.

It was no secret that the organisers of La Vuelta wanted Pogacar to line up in Monaco on August 22. The race's director, Javier Guillén, said less than a week ago that "this is the best year" for the Slovenian to do it, and he's probably correct. In the end, Pogacar won this year's Tour with some ease, unlike in 2025 when he was burnt out and exhausted from doing battle with Jonas Vingegaard, and La Vuelta could act as a springboard for success at the World Championships in Canada in September. But more than that, the 27-year-old will want to win La Vuelta to complete the set of grand tours.

He won the Giro d'Italia in 2024 so all that remains is the Spanish three-week race. Vingegaard, his great rival, already completed the set after securing the *Maglia Rosa* in May and winning La Vuelta in 2025, and so the Dane holds one thing the Slovenian doesn't. Perhaps Pogacar wanted to rectify that sooner rather than later.

Pogacar and his team always said they would wait until after the Tour to make a decision, but it had been well known Pogacar was keen. In the middle of the Tour he addressed comments by Prince Albert of Monaco, who said he believed Pogacar would start this year's Vuelta. "If the prince says that, then the chance is high," Pogacar said.

Compared with 2025, Pogacar was fresh at the end of this year's Tour and clearly fancies another three weeks of hard racing. The world champion is apparently in the mood to tick off all the races he hasn't won. This year he added Milano-San Remo to his *palmarès*, ahead of the valiant Tom Pidcock, as well as the Tour de Suisse and Tour de Romandie, and while Paris-Roubaix remains out of reach (for now), he will go to La Vuelta as the comfortable favourite. And let's not forget that he finished the 2019 Vuelta in third place and won three stages at the age of 20. If he wins in Spain he would be the first man to do the Tour-Vuelta double since Chris Froome in 2017 and there is a very high chance of that. Few other teams have announced their line-ups for the race and certainly none of the big hitters have declared their intentions.

Are Vingegaard and Remco Evenepoel likely to give it a go? It's hard to see Vingegaard making an appearance after doing the Giro as well as the Tour (before crashing out and fracturing his collarbone). Perhaps the 2022 winner, Evenepoel, who is in excellent form, will rise to the challenge, but so far Pogacar is out on his own.

Other potential rivals who were considering La Vuelta may have sighed at the news, but for the race organisers it is something of a coup. The Slovenian brings in huge crowds of adoring fans wherever he goes. Just look at his Pogi Challenge, a three-day charity event around Komenda in Slovenia, where Pogacar was born. Thousands of people arrived in the small town to watch Pogacar beat the likes of Isaac del Toro and Matteo Trentin in a short criterium before he was then himself beaten by an amateur on the Krvavec climb for the second year in a row.

This event shows that Pogacar, lovingly known as Pogi, is perhaps the most popular rider the sport has right now, a personality who transcends cycling as Valentino Rossi did in MotoGP or Ronnie O'Sullivan does in snooker. His quest to complete the set of grand tours will be historic — it is surely only a matter of time before Pogacar adds his name to that select group of eight riders to have won all three.

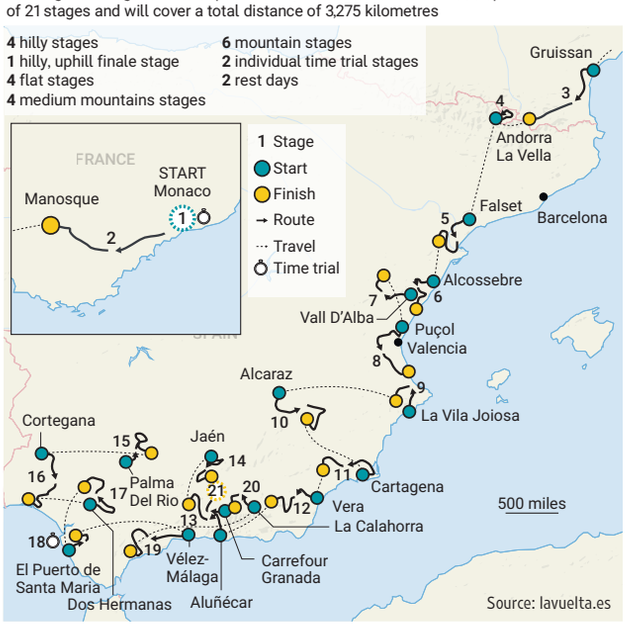
And then what? Paris-Roubaix is all that stands in the way of immortality. If he ticks that off, he would be only the second man to have won all three grand tours and all five monuments alongside, of course, Eddy Merckx.

"I'm excited to say I'm going back to La Vuelta," Pogacar said. "It was my first ever grand tour back in 2019 and an amazing experience. Spain is a country I love to visit and race in, and the time is right to go back."

La Vuelta 2026

Running from August 22 to September 13, La Vuelta 26 will be made up of 21 stages and will cover a total distance of 3,275 kilometres

4 hilly stages
1 hilly, uphill finale stage
4 flat stages
4 medium mountains stages
6 mountain stages
2 individual time trial stages
2 rest days



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Pollock aims to emulate Dupont with Olympic gold

DENNIS GOODWIN/PROSPORTS/SHUTTERSTOCK

Pollock may have to take time away from club action with Northampton if he is to follow in the footsteps of Dupont, left

Charlie Morgan Senior Rugby Writer

Eddie Hearn has confirmed that Henry Pollock intends to emulate Antoine Dupont and win Olympic gold in rugby sevens, but realising that dream at the Los Angeles Games in 2028 looks far from straightforward.

After a meeting in the Mediterranean with Pollock and Finn Russell, the only rugby union clients of his Matchroom agency, Hearn claimed the 21-year-old England back-row forward could earn ten times his present salary by moving away from Northampton Saints.

Hearn also stressed, however, that Pollock remains driven by the prospect of winning trophies. "I look at Henry and I am very pleased with the person he is," Hearn told The Telegraph. "I know there is a perception of him as a 'flash Harry' but in reality, he is a solid young man. Legacy is important.

"He wants to win championships with Northampton, he wants to win the World Cup with England, he wants to win a gold medal for Great Britain Sevens in the Olympics."

The latter goal, achieved by Dupont in Paris two years ago, would arguably be the most difficult to achieve because there are multiple moving parts. First is the thorny issue of qualification. Team GB were relegated from the first tier of the sevens world series, now known as SVNS, last season.

They could still qualify for Los Angeles directly by finishing in the top four across the three grand final events in 2027, which would constitute a remarkable underdog story. Otherwise, they would need to win a European qualifying event or an intercontinental repechage.

Unless he is parachuted in for the Olympic Games directly, which would require him to take the place of another player who may have helped to secure qualification, Pollock would probably need to miss chunks of 15-a-side action with club or country over the year leading up to July 2028.

It is possible, though. Hugo Keenan, of Leinster and Ireland, highly experienced in elite sevens, juggled his time between the formats in 2024 and missed a summer Test series against the Springboks. Dupont took time out of the 15-a-side game over the same campaign, skipping that season's Six Nations, as he helped France to win tournaments on the world sevens series in the build-up to a home Olympics. France also won the 2023-24 grand final. The deal was sweetened for Toulouse as Dupont's involvement in the 2023 World Cup and the following year's Olympics gave them a much bigger salary cap dispensation of €400,000 (about £343,000) rather than the €180,000 they would have earned for a regular 15-a-side international.

Discussions over Pollock's availability would need to take place between Great Britain Sevens, Northampton and England and could seriously impact what he earns with the latter two organisations.

Pollock earns about £150,000 a year from Saints, plus an additional £150,000 from his enhanced Elite Player Squad contract with England, but a bullish Hearn is evidently angling for a pay increase. He labelled Pollock a "seven-figure player" and suggested that discussions over a contract extension were ongoing.

"Northampton have to recognise what they have got," Hearn said. "It is all very well saying there might be players who are a bit more consistent or might be better or whatever, but there aren't players that are making an unquestionable and undeniable difference to the bottom line of the club.

"Henry Pollock drives season-ticket sales. Henry Pollock puts bums on the seats. Henry Pollock drives viewership on TNT or wherever it's going to be. Henry Pollock sells shirts, right? That's the difference.

"So you can actually put an economic value over having Henry Pollock on the team, and that has to be recognised, regardless of the want from Henry. He cannot stay at this club on the money that he's on."

Stars who tried sevens

Sonny Bill Williams He was in the New Zealand team that finished fifth in the 2016 Olympics.
Juan Imhoff The wing also played in Rio, where Racing 92 team-mate Leone Nakarawa won gold for Fiji.
James Davies He took silver with Team GB in 2016 before winning the Pro 12 with the Scarlets.
Cheslin Kolbe He landed Olympic bronze in 2016 before winning two World Cups with South Africa.
Samu Kerevi Part of the Australia team that lost in the quarter-finals in Tokyo in 2021.
Hugo Keenan He represented Ireland in the 2024 Olympics, where they finished sixth.
Mark Nawaqanitawase The Australian just missed out on a medal two years ago.
Antoine Dupont The scrum half inspired France to Olympic gold in front of their home fans in 2024.

Prem referees set for Springboks-All Blacks matches

Charlie Morgan

Two Gallagher Prem referees will take charge of Test matches between South Africa and New Zealand over the coming weeks, with both Matthew Carley and Karl Dickson poised to be part of the officiating team.

The Times understands that Angus Gardner of Australia and Nika Amashukeli of Georgia will complete the line-up of referees across the four-Test series, which begins at Ellis Park in Johannesburg on August 22.

Carley, selected to referee last season's Prem final between Northampton Saints and Exeter Chiefs, oversaw the Springboks for their 24-13 victory over Ireland in Dublin in November. In that game he showed five cards to the home team as they were overwhelmed by South Africa's scrummaging power. Sam Prendergast, Jack Crowley, Andrew Porter and Paddy McCarthy were all sent to the sin-bin, with James Ryan receiving a 20-minute red card.

Carley took charge of South Africa's 24-13 win over Ireland last November

Those sanctions, as well as Sacha Feinberg-Mngomezulu escaping a card for a high tackle on Tommy O'Brien, left Carley open to criticism. However, his performance was defended by the former international referee Owen Doyle.

"Hand on heart, it's hard to blame Carley for the defeat," Doyle wrote in The Irish Times. "While both teams were at it, Ireland's protection of the ball at the tackle was quite frequent, just plain old-fashioned sealing-off, denying the visitors a chance to contest possession.

"Any notion that we were hard done by on the penalty count is also incorrect. Carley pinged South Africa 13 times and Ireland on 18 occasions, of which six were at scrum time, one being the penalty try."

Carley, Dickson, Gardner and Amashukeli all refereed one match each over the recent block of Nations Championship games. Carley took charge of Scotland's defeat of Fiji, with Dickson officiating during France's victory over Australia.

Amashukeli oversaw Scotland's win in Argentina last month, with Gardner looking after the ill-tempered and controversial game between the Pumas and England in Santiago del Estero. The latter match featured seven yellow cards, a record for a Test match.

The Argentina fly half Tomás Albornoz was charged with misconduct after remonstrating with Gardner at the end of England's 31-24 win. An Argentina try was disallowed in the final play of the match after a TMO review.

World Rugby is yet to announce which Test matches these referees will be assigned to, but they will be involved during New Zealand's tour, which begins on Friday with a fixture against the Stormers in Cape Town.

Raducanu to miss another grand slam

CONTINUED FROM BACK

Raducanu described as a "lower-leg niggle" that she had been managing since the "back end of the clay-court season".

Raducanu skipped the WTA event in Eastbourne as a result and then announced her withdrawal from Wimbledon on the eve of the tournament.

"I've done everything possible to try to get to the start line but after a final scan, the niggle I've been managing has developed into a stress fracture and I've been medically advised to stop pushing through," Raducanu said in a statement on June 28.

No wonder Iraola 'hates August'…

Ian Whittell Chicago

Squint hard across the East River, through the low-hanging cloud that shrouded the Manhattan skyline on Tuesday night, and you could just about make out the top of the Empire State Building, lit up red to mark the launch of a new Liverpool kit as a celebration was hosted across the water in Brooklyn.

That must be how the new head coach, Andoni Iraola, views his two weeks in the United States.

The fact his club could commandeer one of the world's most famous buildings spoke volumes about their stature, as did the thousands of US-based Liverpool fans who showed up to watch a below-strength team in friendlies in Nashville, New York and Chicago.

But Iraola did not need to clock 10,000 air miles over the past two weeks to learn that Liverpool are one of the world's top "brands". He was looking for answers to some fundamental football questions and many of those, for now, are covered in as much cloud as Manhattan was last Tuesday.

There is a question of logistics, post-World Cup, which means he has yet to meet key players Virgil van Dijk, Alisson, Cody Gakpo, Alexis Mac Allister and new signing Victor Muñoz, none of whom have been part of the tour.

There is a chronic defensive injury crisis: Joe Gomez is out for about a month; newcomer Jérémy Jacquet was pencilled in to play in Sunday's 4-2 loss to Leeds United but is not yet fit; and Giovanni Leoni is still not ready to return from injury, having made only one appearance since signing 11 months ago.

There has been a lack of signings — only Jacquet and Muñoz, although a move for the Paris Saint-Germain winger Bradley Barcola inches forward.

And, perhaps not unconnected, Michael Edwards has left as chief executive and sporting director Richard Hughes is expected to follow him next month. Mike Gordon, the president of owners Fenway Sports Group (FSG), was in Chicago over the weekend and is expected to take a more prominent role, as he did to such spectacular effect with former manager Jürgen Klopp.

There have also been confirmed reports of FSG selling a minority stake, to a consortium headed by Amit Bhatia, to inject capital.

BILL BARRETT/ISI PHOTOS/GETTY IMAGES

Iraola, above, is facing a defensive crisis while the minor spat between Jones and Szoboszlai, right, has been forgotten

But get Barcola and some defensive cover in before September 1 and Liverpool will be starting to address some of the concerns that Iraola must have noted when inheriting a squad that lost Mohamed Salah, Andrew Robertson and Ibrahima Konaté this summer.

The vast majority of supporters in the US were happy just to see some of their heroes close up in the flesh but the hardcore back on Merseyside are voicing their frustration at a painfully slow transfer window. It explains why Iraola not only hates August but believes it will be many weeks before we see "his" Liverpool, both in terms of personnel and style of play.

"When there is a change of manager, these things take some time," Iraola said. "I would like to say on the first day we are going to be perfect, everyone will be in place, but probably it is not going to be like this, and we will have to do this as quickly as possible.

"I particularly hate August because you start the competition, you still don't know if some of the players are going to leave, who's going to come, there is a lot of uncertainty. It's difficult to build a proper team with a lot of question marks but it is what it is. It's the same every season, and I particularly enjoy when it's September 1, then, oh yeah, this is where we are."

Of course, there were many plusses from this tour, and Iraola even managed to find some from the Leeds game in which his team turned a 2-0 half-time lead into a 4-2 defeat.

"I think we learnt a lot of things," he said. "Obviously it's not the result you want but I think it was probably the most useful friendly we played — in a positive way in the first half and in a negative way in the second half. I think we've learnt a lot from today and we can take good conclusions and solve some things."

Some of the positives against Leeds came in the form of Rio Ngumoha, effective on his preferred left wing. Young midfielder Trey Nyoni shone in glimpses, as did returning World Cup players Alexander Isak, Ryan Gravenberch and Florian Wirtz, the latter scoring the second goal.

New defender Ifeanyi Ndukwe, 18, impressed against Leeds, and has done throughout the tour, but will have to be loaned out this season because he has not qualified for a UK work permit.

Off the field, in the US, club legends Phil Thompson, Ian Rush and Robbie Fowler worked tirelessly with Liverpool's community and charity endeavours while present players undertook some team-building — a group was spotted using some rare leisure time to go shopping in Chicago last week, for example.

It was not all roses, of course. There was a very minor spat as Curtis Jones reacted badly to not being handed the captain's armband when Dominik Szoboszlai instead gave it to Kostas Tsimikas after he was substituted in New York.

It was a storm in a tea cup and instantly forgotten. Jones, in any case, could yet sign for Inter Milan — just one of many answers his head coach is waiting to emerge from the clouds.

talkSPORT
THE BRAZIL-IANT RETURN
ALAN BRAZIL IS BACK ON THE talkSPORT BREAKFAST SHOW
TOMORROW FROM 6AM
ON RADIO ON THE APP ONLINE ON YOUTUBE ON SMART TV

Can Mancini win back hearts after Italy return?

RICCARDO DE LUCA/ANADOLU/GETTY IMAGES

Mancini is back with Italy, having left in 2023 before moving to Saudi Arabia, left

Alasdair Mackenzie Rome

Roberto Mancini wasted no time in his second unveiling as Italy head coach.

"A lot of you will have the same question about what happened three years ago, so I will get ahead of it," the 61-year-old began.

"I'm very sorry. The Italy shirt was always very important to me. It was like losing the love of my life. That means I made a mistake."

The first publicly uttered words of the Mancini 2.0 era made it perfectly clear that this is not a glorious homecoming for the architect of the Azzurri's Euro 2020 triumph, but a hugely divisive appointment coming off a chaotic week for the four-times world champions.

Mancini burned many bridges when he left the national team in August 2023 to take on a lucrative role as Saudi Arabia manager. At the time, he was supposed to be putting the pieces back together after a humiliating World Cup play-off defeat by North Macedonia. Instead, his exit sparked a nosedive for Italy as, under his successor, Luciano Spalletti, they exited Euro 2024 in the round of 16 against Switzerland before Gennaro Gattuso oversaw a third consecutive failed World Cup qualification campaign earlier this year.

March's play-off defeat by Bosnia-Herzegovina was seen as the moment when a line was drawn in the sand. Enough was enough. But instead, the newly elected Italian federation head Giovanni Malagò oversaw a recruitment process that only brought further embarrassment.

The chaos has played out in public over the past couple of weeks. Things started well, with Malagò's decision to appoint the AC Milan and Italy great Paolo Maldini as technical director alongside an adviser, Leonardo, being generally well received.

However, it didn't take long for it to fall apart. Maldini and Leonardo's unsuccessful attempts to woo Carlo Ancelotti and Pep Guardiola for the head coach position were followed by Maldini's favoured candidate, Andrea Pirlo, being ruled out of the running because of his controversial role as a global ambassador for a Russian betting firm.

Maldini and Leonardo had seen enough. Little more than two weeks after taking on the responsibility of guiding Italy's rebuilding project, they both walked.

"It was a calm and consensual decision to go our separate ways," Malagò said. "I needed someone who could share my vision of who would be the Italy coach. This shared vision on Mancini was not present with Maldini."

According to the Milanese newspaper Corriere della Sera, Maldini complained: "They do not want change," before departing. It is a familiar gripe.

Malagò, a friend of Mancini who was playing alongside him in a five-a-side football tournament in Rome on the day of his appointment last Tuesday, had reportedly always pushed for his return.

Alongside him came the recently retired Claudio Ranieri, who was offered the job of replacing Maldini as technical director while bronzing himself on the beach; Malagò said a third senior figure would complete the line-up next week.

Almost immediately, Mancini's controversial move to Saudi Arabia became a talking point again. Many Italians have still not forgiven him for abandoning ship three years ago, which became abundantly clear from some of the reaction in the media. "Your apologies are not enough for the Italy fans," wrote the Corriere dello Sport journalist Alberto Polverosi in an "open letter" to Mancini on Thursday. "The betrayal was real and the apology is just words; you must apologise with actions and avoid further disappointments."

A leading pundit, Paolo Condò, echoed the sentiment. "He chose to abandon the national team for a lavish payday in Saudi Arabia … those kinds of choices are a road of no return. If you make a decision like that, the national team should no longer be open to you," he said.

Mancini made sure to address the doubts head-on, while attempting to paint a brighter picture of the future.

"I hope to build a team that is so beautiful and successful that it convinces the fans to fall in love with the national team again. Then, maybe they will forgive me too," he said.

What does he mean by success? "I want to win an important trophy, maybe even two," he said.

The former Manchester City manager also shed some light on his plan to build for the future, proposing that every Italy team from under-18 upwards plays with a common tactical identity.

For all the negativity, there are plenty of high-profile figures within the game who have thrown their support behind Mancini. It isn't too difficult to make the argument in his favour. He was not only the last coach to lead Italy to a major trophy — that Euros victory five years ago — but the last to give the Azzurri a clear identity and structure.

Plus, at a time when many are crying out for increased opportunities for young players and more outside-the-box thinking to help revolutionise the Italian game at international and domestic levels, Mancini has a track record of being willing to make bold calls. During his first term, he gave Italy debuts to 57 players. He called up a 19-year-old Nicolò Zaniolo before he had made a senior club appearance and gave Simone Pafundi his first cap aged 16.

Mancini also unearthed Mateo Retegui, a striker with Italian roots playing with Tigre in Argentina, who went on to win the Serie A golden boot with Atalanta in 2024-25 and has now scored 11 goals for the Italian national team.

Italy's 1982 World Cup-winning hero, Giuseppe Bergomi, called Mancini a "visionary" who will "be able to make the national team competitive straight away." The Como head coach, Cesc Fàbregas, said he was a "winner" who "plays good football".

But perhaps the most important backing of all was revealed by Malagò at the press conference. "Last night, Gigio Donnarumma [the Italy goalkeeper] sent me a text that said 'President, thank you, this is exactly what the squad and I wanted,'" he said.

At least with the team united behind him, Mancini can set to work on winning back hearts and minds — and once again rebuild Italy's cracked, damaged reputation on the global stage.

Tzolis has 'king of Sparta' fitness levels

Gary Jacob

This summer, Arsenal signed Christos Tzolis for £34 million to replace Leandro Trossard, who had proved to be one of the best value-for-money buys in the Premier League before joining the Turkish club Besiktas last month.

Trossard scored 36 goals and claimed 34 assists during his time in north London, including a winner against West Ham United to set up last season's title triumph. On paper, Tzolis can match Trossard for goal contributions, claiming 43 goals and 45 assists over two seasons at Club Bruges. He was last season's player of the year in Belgium.

Against Girona on Saturday, Tzolis gave Arsenal fans an early taste of what they can expect when he cut inside and slotted an effort into the bottom corner via a slight deflection. Two days after signing, the 24-year-old assisted a goal for Reiss Nelson in a behind-closed-doors friendly against MK Dons. It is a far cry from his two seasons at Norwich City, when he made only six league starts across 2021-22 and 2022-23.

"It was my second professional year in football, and the team was not ready for the Premier League," the Greece international said. "That makes it difficult to adapt and to play how I could because I'm a more offensive player who played for a team that has the ball and creates a lot of chances."

Tzolis, 24, has made an excellent start at Arsenal

Tzolis said his best qualities were creativity, his work rate, and being direct. He topped the club's pre-season fitness testing, having been training with Bruges for a fortnight before he moved to Arsenal. His metrics led a fitness coach to nickname him "Leonidas", after the king of Sparta who led a small Greek force into battle against a Persian army — portrayed by Gerard Butler in the film *300*.

Tzolis said he is not worried about the prospect of competing with Vinicius Jr, if Arsenal can pull off his signing from Real Madrid, after conversations with the club's manager, Mikel Arteta.

"I'm confident as a player, so I don't think about the future and what the club will do in this position," he said. "Mikel and I spoke more about my story. He knows my game style and wants me to do the same things at Arsenal."

The winger grew up playing across the front line, but based his game on that of the Barcelona and Spain forward David Villa. "He was an inside forward — a left pocket player who always went for goals," he said. Alexis Sánchez played a similar role for Arsenal and Tzolis has taken the No 17 shirt once worn by the Chilean.

"I see similarities," he said. "I will have the same success."

United coach Skinner exits with WSL season looming

Kit Shepard Women's Football Reporter

Marc Skinner has stepped down as the Manchester United Women head coach after a mutual agreement to terminate his contract.

Skinner was appointed in 2021 and had a contract until at least next summer, but departs after an underwhelming season and a transfer window thus far defined by outgoings.

His exit a month before the start of the new campaign, and United's search for a replacement, will place the club's commitment to their women's team under scrutiny again. Since Sir Jim Ratcliffe invested in United and started to front their football operations in February 2024, he has made several comments that indicate the women's side are not his priority.

Skinner, 43, appeared to grow frustrated at United's lack of squad depth last season. Having qualified for the Champions League main draw for the first time, they struggled to compete on both the domestic and European front. They were eliminated by Bayern Munich in the Champions League quarter-finals and finished fourth in the Women's Super League (WSL), which meant they failed to qualify for this season's Champions League.

Skinner stressed the need for better player recruitment at United. In the most recent set of financial accounts, covering the 2024-25 season, United's wage bill (£5.88 million) was just over half that of Arsenal's. However, they have sold three players this summer and spent a fee on only one signing.

Skinner attracted criticism for his playing style. He won one major trophy, the 2024 FA Cup, and United finished in the WSL top three only twice during his five seasons in charge. "Marc leaves having made a significant contribution to the continued progress of United Women," a club statement read.

United start their WSL season on September 4 against London City Lionesses.

How are your team doing in

From Arsenal's pursuit of Vinícius Jr to Spurs' revamp, our writers give their verdict on the state of play at each Premier League club

This summer's four biggest deals

ELLIOT ANDERSON (£116m, Nott'm Forest to Man City)

SANDRO TONALI (£100m, Newcastle to Tottenham)

ARSENAL

How good or bad has their window been? Slow start with potential to be special if they pull off the signing of Real Madrid's Vinícius Jr (Gary Jacob writes). The winger would join the expected arrival of midfielder Bruno Guimarães from Newcastle United, Arsenal having already brought in the left winger Christos Tzolis to replace the departed Leandro Trossard.
What do they still need? A versatile centre back to cover William Saliba's lengthy absence and issues at right back, an elite left winger and potentially a forward — depending on which players they can offload.

ASTON VILLA

How good or bad has their window been? Losing your best player is never the best start to a summer, with Morgan Rogers heading to Chelsea (Charlotte Duncker writes). They've broken the club transfer record to bring in Johan Manzambi and further strengthened in midfield with Premier League experience by signing João Gomes, but will that be enough? Alejandro Garnacho has come in with a point to prove and Unai Emery could really do with all his signings working out. Each time Villa have lost key players under Emery they have managed to adapt and go again but it's another period of rebuilding — and that's without the potential exits of other players.
What do they still need? More attacking options, especially another winger, while both full-back positions need addressing.

BOURNEMOUTH

How good or bad has their window been? Compared to this time last year, when several of Bournemouth's biggest names moved on, new head coach Marco Rose's first window has been a quiet one (Joe Harston writes). In replacing the centre back Marcos Senesi, who has joined Tottenham Hotspur, they have put more faith in youth at the back by signing the 22-year-old António Silva from Benfica.
What do they still need? Providing they can keep hold of their impressive attack, there do not seem to be any gaps in the Bournemouth squad that urgently need filling. Bolstering their options in midfield may be wise considering the extra workload that playing in Europe will bring.

BRENTFORD

How good or bad has their window been? It has been a sensible window so far for Brentford (Joe Harston writes). Forwards Callum Wilson and Jaidon Anthony were through the door in time for the pre-season camp in Portugal and they bring much-needed competition for Igor Thiago and Kevin Schade. Mamadou Sangaré's transfer from Lens is a statement signing, though, and he should be a significant improvement on the departing Jordan Henderson. For a club-record fee of £41.1 million, the 24-year-old defensive midfielder is moving to west London after being named in the Ligue 1 team of the season and is turning his back on Champions League football with his former side.
What do they still need? A new left back should be a priority. Their present options are Rico Henry and Aaron Hickey, but both are injury-prone, which has left the winger Keane Lewis-Potter deputising at full back for large periods of the past two campaigns.

BRIGHTON & HOVE ALBION

How good or bad has their window been? Brighton have gone hard again on potential instead of proven signings after spending about £70 million on two wingers — Zadok Yohanna, 18, and Rodrigo Rego, 20 — as well the defender Luka Vuskovic, 19 (Tom Allnutt writes). Pascal Struijk, 26, Costinha, 26, and Michael Svoboda, 27, are all older but only Struijk has played in the Premier League.
What do they still need? Brighton look well set in defence but the departure of Danny Welbeck, who scored 14 goals last season, leaves them short up front, while Kaoru Mitoma needs better cover out wide, especially given the serious hamstring injury he suffered in May.

CHELSEA

How good or bad has their window been? When did we last say that Chelsea had a sensible transfer window (Tom Allnutt writes)? Morgan Rogers is a statement signing while Danny Welbeck, Jordan Henderson and Maxence Lacroix look like smart, know-what-you're-getting additions. Geovany Quenda, the 19-year-old winger, is one of Europe's most highly rated youngsters.
What do they still need? Chelsea will never win the Premier League without a top-class goalkeeper and it remains to be seen if Robert Sánchez can hit that sort of level consistently. After the departure of Marc Cucurella, they also need another, more attacking left back, especially if Xabi Alonso wants to play with wingbacks.

COVENTRY CITY

How good or bad has their window been? Promotion has demanded squad strengthening, with the owner Doug King stressing they will do so the "Cov Way" (Paul Joyce writes). There have been three signings so far: Loum Tchaouna from Burnley, Aurèle Amenda from Eintracht Frankfurt and Frank Onyeka, whose loan from Brentford has become a permanent deal.
What do they still need? The goalkeeper Carl Rushworth is expected to join from Brighton, having been on loan at Coventry last season. Do not downplay the pulling power of manager Frank Lampard. Chelsea say there has been interest from a number of clubs, including Coventry, in Mykhailo Mudryk.

CRYSTAL PALACE

How good or bad has their window been? Palace do notoriously late deals and Óscar Mingueza is the only arrival so far, replacing Nathaniel Clyne (Gary Jacob writes). Pre-season has been disrupted because 12 players were at the World Cup.
What do they still need? Toulouse's Charlie Cresswell and Atalanta's Odilon Kossounou are among the options to replace centre back Maxence Lacroix, who has joined Chelsea. The injury-prone Takehiro Tomiyasu is on trial. Youssouf Fofana is among their central midfield targets and Jean-Philippe Mateta's future is unclear after the forward, who has entered the final year of his contract, told the club he wanted to leave in January.

EVERTON

How good or bad has their window been? A slow burner with Hayden Hackney and Tyrique George added to David Moyes's squad (Paul Joyce writes).
What do they still need? The defensive midfielder Christian Norgaard is set for a medical to seal a switch from Arsenal, while the Celtic right back Alistair Johnston is a target. Jack Grealish could return from Manchester City for a second stint on loan.

FULHAM

How good or bad has their window been? Álvaro Arbeloa's Real Madrid links look to already be playing a part in Fulham's business with the arrivals of the young talents Gonzalo García, 22, and César Palacios, 21, confirmed last night (Joe Harston writes). They may be exciting options for the future but little is known about their Premier League readiness.
What do they still need? Raúl Jiménez and Harry Wilson are the most notable departures and while García may be a suitable replacement up front, they should be searching for another right winger to compete with Oscar Bobb.

HULL CITY

How good or bad has their window been? Not good so far, with the squad, despite four signings, feeling weaker than the one that surprisingly came up from the Championship last season (Martin Hardy writes). Jack Butland and Matt Targett will add experience but Ivor Pandur and Kyle Joseph, key players last season, have left, along with loanees Joe Gelhardt and Lewis Koumas.
What do they still need? Hull hope to get defenders Nobel Mendy and Lucas Herrington, and the goalkeeper Konstantinos Tzolakis, into the club by the time they travel to Germany at the end of the week.

IPSWICH TOWN

How good or bad has their window been? Gary O'Neil's club have certainly been active in the transfer window (Joe Harston writes). The winger Abdul Fatawu, who impressed for Leicester City last season, looks the most exciting addition. Issa Diop's arrival will provide some much-needed Premier League experience in their back line.
What do they still need? Their midfield is certainly a weak point but it is something they are looking to address with several defensive midfielders, including Fulham's Sasa Lukic and Burnley's Florentino Luis, being heavily linked with a move to Portman Road.

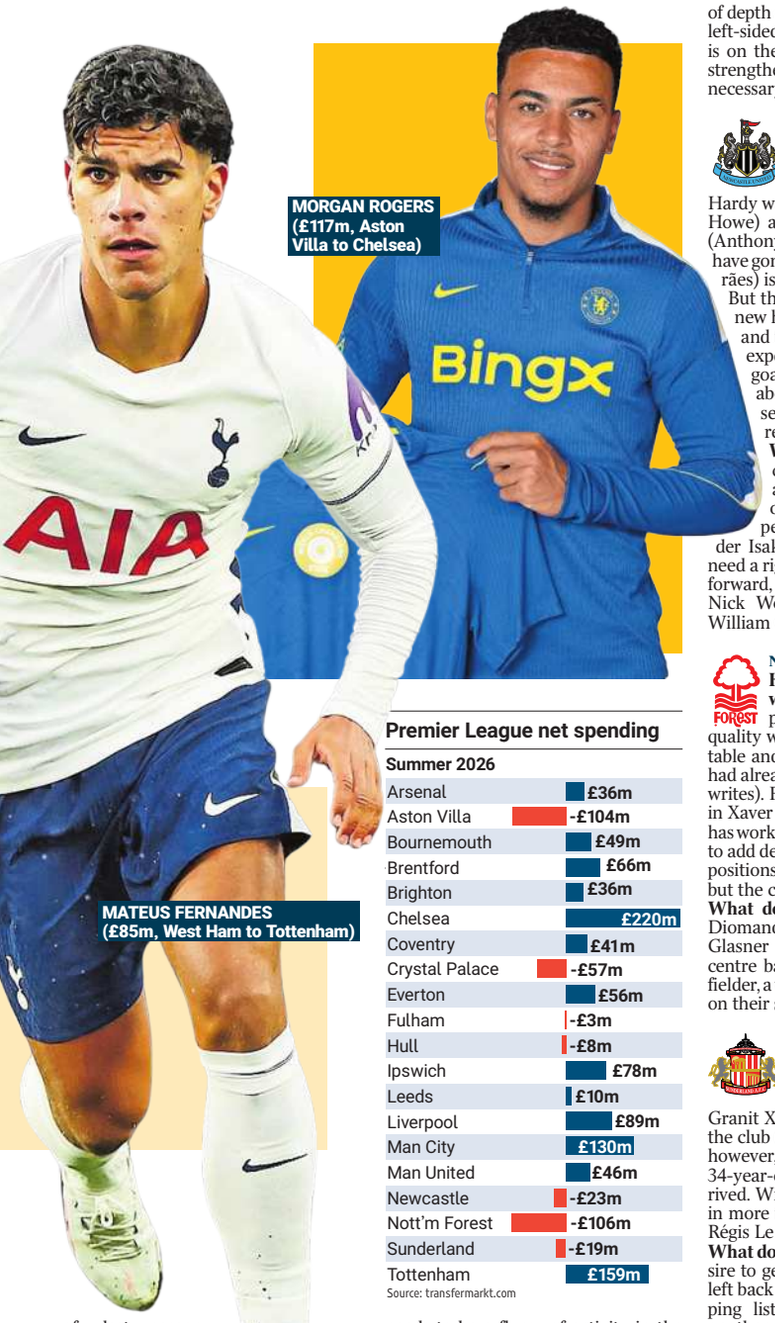
LEEDS UNITED

How good or bad has their window been? This could be a very good window for Leeds (Martin Hardy writes). They hope to sign James Trafford for £45 million and that should prove to be an excellent bit of business. Trafford is the England goalkeeper-in-waiting. Harry Wilson joined from Fulham for nothing after a great season and defensively they have replaced Pascal Struijk with the Bosnian Tarik Muharemovic.
What do they still need? Like most clubs, Leeds could do with greater firepower and a striker is still a target, to help and to compete with Dominic Calvert-Lewin and Lukas Nmecha.

LIVERPOOL

How good or bad has their window been? Underwhelming given the departures of Mohamed Salah, Andrew Robertson and Ibrahima Konaté at the end

transfer window?



Premier League net spending

Summer 2026	
Arsenal	£36m
Aston Villa	-£104m
Bournemouth	£49m
Brentford	£66m
Brighton	£36m
Chelsea	£220m
Coventry	£41m
Crystal Palace	-£57m
Everton	£56m
Fulham	-£3m
Hull	-£8m
Ipswich	£78m
Leeds	£10m
Liverpool	£89m
Man City	£130m
Man United	£46m
Newcastle	-£23m
Nott'm Forest	-£106m
Sunderland	-£19m
Tottenham	£159m

Source: transfermarkt.com

of last season (Paul Joyce writes). Spain winger Víctor Muñoz arrived from Osasuna and Jérémy Jacquet has checked in after signing from Rennes in January.
What do they still need? A winger, although Paris Saint-Germain's present £145 million valuation of Bradley Barcola is too high, and a right back given Conor Bradley's continued absence due to injury.

MANCHESTER CITY
How good or bad has their window been? Securing Elliot Anderson was a good piece of business but things have stalled as Enzo Maresca looks to bring in fresh faces to a squad that lost a lot of experience at the end of the season (Charlotte Duncker writes). Rodri is still at the club, which is a huge positive after interest from Real Madrid, but there needs to be a flurry of activity in the final month of the window.
What do they still need? A forward, a right back and another midfielder are on Maresca's wish list. If Rodri does leave for Real, they'll need a replacement for him, while Geronimo Rulli is emerging as the most likely replacement for the goalkeeper James Trafford, who is set to leave.

MANCHESTER UNITED
How good or bad has their window been? United pivoted quickly after missing out on Elliot Anderson to bring in Youri Tielemans and Andrey Santos, but neither match the level of the new Manchester City midfielder (Charlotte Duncker writes). They are still short on numbers as they plan for a season in the Champions League but there's still time to sort that out.
What do they still need? Another midfield signing could be made, after Manuel Ugarte's injury, and they are in need of depth across the squad as a whole. A left-sided player, a winger or a full back, is on the list while another striker to strengthen their forward options is necessary.

NEWCASTLE UNITED
How good or bad has their window been? Where on earth do you start (Martin Hardy writes)? The head coach (Eddie Howe) and two of their best players (Anthony Gordon and Sandro Tonali) have gone and another (Bruno Guimarães) is looking longingly at the exit.
But then there are the incomings: a new head coach in Matthias Jaissle and five players, all young and inexperienced and two of them goalkeepers. Are Newcastle about to be the surprise of the season or are they looking at a relegation fight? No one knows.
What do they still need? They could really do with the Guimarães situation being sorted out very quickly to avoid a repeat of last summer's Alexander Isak soap opera. They definitely need a right back and possibly a centre forward, but that would mean one of Nick Woltemade, Yoane Wissa and William Osula leaving.

NOTTINGHAM FOREST
How good or bad has their window been? While losing a player of Elliot Anderson's quality was disappointing it was inevitable and the planning to replace him had already begun (Charlotte Duncker writes). Forest moved quickly to bring in Xaver Schlager, who Oliver Glasner has worked with before, and are looking to add depth in midfield. There are still positions that need to be strengthened but the club seems to have a plan.
What do they still need? Ousmane Diomande looks set to join the club as Glasner attempts to strengthen at centre back. As well as another midfielder, a wingback and a striker are also on their shopping list.

SUNDERLAND
How good or bad has their window been? Fighting off Chelsea interest to keep Granit Xhaka was a huge moment for the club (Martin Hardy writes). So far, however, only Thomas Meunier, the 34-year-old Belgian defender, has arrived. With a first European campaign in more than 50 years ahead of them, Régis Le Bris needs new players.
What do they still need? There is a desire to get busy in this window, with a left back and a winger top of the shopping list. They could also do with another centre forward. Brian Brobbey had a fine season but needed only seven Premier League goals to finish as the club's top scorer.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR
How good or bad has their window been? It has been an eye-catching summer for Tottenham but the main weakness last season was creativity and that area is still to be addressed (Tom Allnutt writes). Sandro Tonali and Mateus Fernandes are excellent additions in midfield while Jan Paul van Hecke, Marcos Senesi and Andrew Robertson add strength and depth in defence. As it stands, Spurs still look short in the final third.
What do they still need? Two or three players up front with real quality not potential, including a game-changer on the left wing who can contribute ten-plus goals. If Dominic Solanke's fitness cannot be relied upon, Spurs will need a proven striker too.

West Ham co-owner Sullivan told not to attend home matches

James Beal Investigations Editor
Shanti Das Senior Investigations Reporter

The West Ham United co-owner David Sullivan has been advised not to attend the club's home matches after a Times and BBC Panorama investigation into sexual misconduct allegations.
The operator of the London Stadium has recommended to the club that Sullivan, 77, does not go to games, due to potential for fan unrest. Additionally, the stadium operator has asked for advance notice of any planned visits by Sullivan in order to implement extra safety and operational measures. West Ham, however, have told the London Stadium that they expect the businessman to still attend games at the ground, before the club's home Carabao Cup tie against Portsmouth on Saturday.
Sullivan resigned as director and joint chairman of West Ham in June, shortly before the publication of the joint Times and BBC Panorama investigation. He strongly denies all the allegations. Three women accused him of abusing his power as owner of the Sport newspapers to sleep with them. Four other women accused Sullivan of exploitative and predatory behaviour. Sullivan categorically denied all the claims, calling them "factually incorrect and entirely false". He said that he reserved all legal rights in relation to any false or defamatory allegations. He remains West Ham's largest shareholder. The Times and BBC Panorama investigation also revealed that Sullivan has had safeguarding restrictions imposed on him since 2023, banning him from contact with West Ham's youth and women's teams. The restrictions were placed on Sullivan after the FA received a historical allegation against him.
Sullivan said the allegation was false. London Stadium subsequently wrote to West Ham expressing concern that it was not told of the safeguarding restrictions. A spokesman for London Stadium said yesterday that "following media reports at the end of the season regarding a safeguarding matter being managed by the club" it had "sought further information to ensure it could fulfil its own safeguarding responsibilities".
It said that West Ham had told them that the "matter was investigated and that the club does not consider there to be an ongoing safeguarding risk associated with Mr Sullivan attending the stadium". The spokesman added: "However, given the potential for demonstrations and anti-social behaviour by some spectators, we have recommended to the club that he does not attend."
Sullivan was approached for comment while the club declined to comment.

Newcastle reject Arsenal's £75m offer for Guimarães

Martin Hardy

Newcastle United have turned down an opening offer from Arsenal for Bruno Guimarães, believed to be in the region of £75 million.
The offer was made on Sunday and is the first contact between the clubs over the 28-year-old Brazil midfielder. Newcastle insist they do not want to sell their captain, but it is believed Arsenal have scheduled a medical for early this week, thinking the transfer will go through. It is thought that the deal can be completed if Newcastle receive an improved offer.
Guimarães took a flight yesterday from Brazil to Spain, where he has linked up with his Newcastle teammates in La Manga for their pre-season training camp. Guimarães has intimated to Newcastle bosses his desire to join the Premier League champions.
Newcastle confirmed yesterday morning the signing of the Czech Republic goalkeeper Lukas Hornicek from Braga for a fee believed to be £25.7 million.
Meanwhile, promoted Coventry City are among the clubs to have registered an interest in Chelsea's Mykhailo Mudryk.
The winger made eight appearances under Frank Lampard, the Coventry manager, during his caretaker stint in charge of Chelsea in 2023.
Two other Premier League clubs are thought to have made enquiries about Mudryk's availability, in addition to three European clubs.

Uefa considering legal action against under-fire Infantino

CONTINUED FROM BACK

action and that all documents and information relating to the plan, called Fifa Forward Enterprises (FFE), to sell a stake in Fifa tournaments to private investors should be preserved.
The letter, a copy of which has been seen by The Times, says: "Uefa hereby gives formal notice that it is actively considering legal action, arbitration, and/or regulatory complaints arising out of and in connection with the FFE plan proposed by Fifa and all related matters.
"You and Fifa are required to take immediate steps to identify, locate, and preserve all documents and electronically stored information described in this notice that are in your or Fifa's possession, custody, or control. These obligations arise independently of any internal retention policy you or your organisation maintain and supersede any routine document destruction or deletion policies that would otherwise apply."
The letter also names 14 executives, including Infantino and Fifa's head of global football development, Arsène Wenger, who should "specifically preserve all such materials in their possession, custody, or control". Fifa's secretary general, Mattias Grafström, and director of independent committees, Mario Gallavotti, are also on the list.
Wenger has told friends he has no intention of resigning from his position as he believes he has a mission to help youth football across the world.

Sport

Aussies got it wrong?

Faith in ageing quartet may be good news for England in Ashes

Steve James, page 49

‘Paralyse Fifa’: Rivals’ plan to oust Infantino

FA to withdraw support for president’s re-election

Martyn Ziegler
Sports News Reporter of the Year

An alliance has been formed aimed at toppling Gianni Infantino, with the leaders planning to “paralyse Fifa” and prepared to stage their own international competitions if he refuses to step down as president.

Infantino has been desperately trying to secure backing from his old power base after the collapse of his plan to sell off a stake in the World Cup to private investors, with the Swiss-Italian lawyer now under intense pressure from opponents to resign.

The leaders of Uefa, Concacaf and the Asian Football Confederation are determined to oust Infantino and sources say they have a number of strategies to use if he insists on remaining in power and seeks re-election for a fourth term in March.

Infantino’s opponents are planning to impose a “governance boycott” — refusing to take part in Fifa council or committee meetings or ratify Fifa decisions — and are prepared to establish rival international competitions. Uefa has a blueprint for a global Nations League, which it commissioned in 2017 but never used.

Infantino, 56, has secured only 15 declarations of support from the 211 member nations since The Times broke the news of the planned sell-off on Tuesday, which has intensified calls for Infantino to resign before the election.

One source said: “Everyone is very determined he needs to go, and if not we will take all the necessary steps [to remove him from power]. That includes future international competitions — would the big South American countries prefer to play France or Spain, or Lebanon or Djibouti?

“Everyone is very determined, there are no backward steps now.”

There may also be calls for an emergency Fifa council meeting if a majority of members are persuaded to call for Infantino to quit.

A number of European associations, including England and Wales, have withdrawn letters of support for Infantino’s re-election after the uproar over his World Cup sell-off plan.

The FA’s move comes after its statement on Saturday calling for “a full and robust review of Fifa’s leadership and governance to ensure that the global game is run transparently”.

The Football Association of Wales (FAW) said in a statement: “The Football Association of Wales hereby confirms its withdrawal of support for the candidature of Mr Gianni Infantino for re-election as Fifa president for the 2027–2031 term.

“The recent failures in good governance, processes, leadership, values, stakeholder management, communications and sound judgment have led us to a position where Mr Infantino has lost the confidence of the FAW to remain at the helm of world football. Failing to put the best interests of football first is a failure we cannot accept.”

Meanwhile, Uefa has sent Infantino a legal letter from its United States-based lawyers warning it is considering legal

Continued on page 55

CHRIS LEE/CHELSEA FC/GETTY IMAGES

What does your club still need?

As Jordan Henderson joins Chelsea from Brentford, our experts run the rule over each Premier League team’s summer transfer business, pages 54-55

Raducanu out of US Open in latest blow

Tom Kershaw Tennis Correspondent

Emma Raducanu will miss the US Open because of a stress fracture in her lower right leg.

The British No1 pulled out of Wimbledon at the 11th hour due to the injury in June after she was spotted wearing an orthopedic boot in the build-up to the championships.

Raducanu has been recuperating at a five-star resort in St Moritz, Switzerland, from where she posted a video of herself hitting serves with the boot still on. But it is understood the nature of the stress fracture — reportedly stress-four, which can require eight to 16 weeks to heal — means Raducanu’s medical team have already advised the 23-year-old to skip the entirety of the US hard-court swing, which ends with the US Open. The tournament begins at the end of the month.

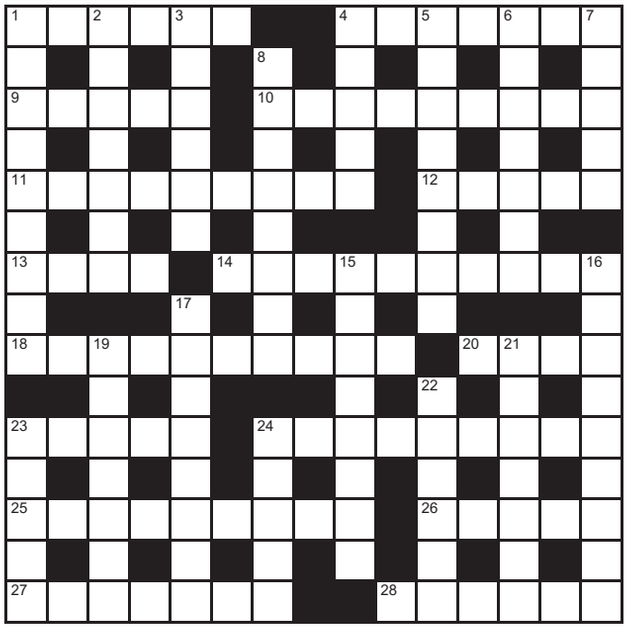
The news is yet another blow, five years on from Raducanu’s victory at Flushing Meadows as an 18-year-old qualifier. The world No 49 has repeatedly suffered injuries as her body has broken down under the strain of life on tour, including surgeries on both wrists and her left ankle in 2023, and this season has been no different.

Raducanu split from her coach, Francisco Roig, after a second-round exit at the Australian Open before reaching the final in Cluj-Napoca in February. That marked Raducanu’s first WTA Tour-level final since her grand-slam title but she contracted a chest infection in Romania and post-viral symptoms then kept her off court for ten weeks.

Raducanu reunited with Andrew Richardson — the coach who guided her to glory in New York — as she sought to recapture the more aggressive style of her late teens. The partnership started to bear fruit at Queen’s, where Raducanu beat two top-20 players before losing in the final against Donna Vekic. But the toll of playing five matches in six days exacerbated what

Continued on page 51

Times Crossword 29,612



ACROSS

1 Writer’s second copy — and editor’s first (6)
4 A support actor of dubious quality who almost died in the theatre? (7)
9 Country address offered to chaps in the past? (5)
10 Little programme skill in item on *Bake Off*? (5,4)
11 Begin travelling to Nigeria (9)
12 Departed, grabbing time for coffee (5)
13 Appreciated place with gardens around November (4)
14 Eton’s involved in appealing fraud (10)
18 Chance of new start in Forbidden City when a king returned (6,4)
20 Reject shortened branch railway (4)
23 Cell breaker only Sing Sing keeps locked up (5)
24 Silly fool messed around with virus (9)
25 Celebrate in cold air in restaurant (9)
26 Speech from revolutionary core of Africa (5)
27 Confusion of language between Middle English and English (7)
28 Black sharper footwear (6)

DOWN

1 Type of curdled milk, pint-sized with no top to swiftly go high (9)
2 Salad course dressed with caviar? (7)
3 One outlawed and forbade the thing, reportedly (6)
4 More than enough taste without the topping of salt (5)
5 Florrie’s lingerie’s not entirely white (8)
6 Hot wearing suit in heated areas? (7)
7 Small donation securing Republican headgear (5)
8 Disdainful of pork pie right after wine (8)
15 Duck and hawk accepted by mostly fit place for treatment (8)
16 Rory hikes rocky Dales location (9)
17 Piece of timber, to name something that floats in water (8)
19 Dwarf British tree not completely well-rounded (7)
21 Extend a number in Gershwin’s opening scene (7)
22 Window key earlier failing to open (6)
23 London Met initially introducing old copper’s stand-in (5)
24 Make for church (5)

Yesterday’s solution 29,611

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TIMES 2

August 4 | **2026**

The Burnham bump problem

How superfit midlife men can lose their paunch

Adam Ramsay-Peaty will reconcile — if his family 'improve'. Hmm

Shane Watson

This heatwave summer has also been the summer of heating up family feuds. The Ramsay-Peatys and the Peatys and the Peltz-Beckhams and the Beckhams have been neck and neck for the past two months, occasionally challenged by that other frontrunner, the Sussexes versus the Windsors. The action has been fairly evenly spread, but at the time of going to press Adam Ramsay-Peaty has inched ahead of the field with a statement that, if there were courses taught on crisis resolution, could be the basis of a seminar entitled How Not to Apologise.

When asked (in an interview with the Guardian) a few days ago about the possibility of a reconciliation with his family, Ramsay-Peaty said this: "For me, as a Christian, there has to be forgiveness. It doesn't mean you have to forget, but forgiveness takes time. I'm not saying that it won't get better but it has to come from a place where I feel like they've improved as people..."

If you're not howling with laughter after reading this you're probably a member of the Peaty family. It's not just the patronising tone but the fact that he has to be the judge of whether they have "improved" sufficiently that makes you wonder if Ramsay-Peaty has the same therapist as Prince Harry. We, the rubber-necking public, are now experts in the family feud department and take it from us: this is a hole-digger that will take us way up to and beyond next Christmas.

The funny thing about the almost constant drip of skirmishes in these family feuds is that we're all genuinely waiting for the moment when someone (the younger male) extends the hand of friendship and calls it quits. We're sure it's coming because the contentious issues — a row over the choice of wedding dress (Peltz-Beckhams/Beckhams); a row over what the groom's mother should wear to the wedding (Ramsay-Peatys/Peatys); a row over the bridesmaid's tights (Sussexes/Windsors) — are so breathtakingly trivial compared with a lifetime of parental devotion and family memories and a future estranged from your siblings and their children.

They're going to wake up tomorrow, we think, and say to themselves: "Life's too short! I miss my little sister" (Brooklyn); "I miss the pubs and banter and Skippy" (Harry); "I'm sad that my mum who looked after my first child all the time will not even see the one who's due in a couple of months" (Ramsay-Peaty). We keep waiting for the breakthrough — the event that the estranged child cannot ignore that will bring them swiftly back into the fold — and then those come and go: David Beckham's knighthood, the World Cup, Holly Ramsay-Peaty's pregnancy — not even two cancer diagnoses in Harry's family cut through the hostilities.

Adam Ramsay-Peaty and his mother, Caroline

Now it's starting to feel as if genuine reconciliation is a fantasy, because in all these feuds the estranged son is seeking repentance before they'll consider getting back to normal. Every overture and olive branch ends up as a veiled threat. Show me you've improved and we'll talk about forgiveness. Sort out my security and we'll consider borrowing one of your palaces. Stop sending me birthday messages and posting pictures of me when I was little and I'll... well, actually there's no message of hope from the Peltz-Beckham camp. Not so far.

Harry's latest olive branch wrapped in barbed wire is a request for the King to stand beside him on stage at next year's Invictus Games in Birmingham, an invitation that, at this point, sounds like yet another demand. It would have been easy for him to make the request privately, but announcing it this way — making it a public choice between supporting him and not — is more in keeping with the new style of loaded rapprochement. "This is important to me, I am owed respect and this is how you can show it" is the message. As attempts at reconciliation go it sounds a lot like Ramsay-Peaty's "when you change to my liking we can talk".

It doesn't seem to have occurred to these men that they might have apologies to make themselves. They want peace but only if their families admit they were wholly in the wrong and repent. What these two have in common, besides feeling they have the moral high ground (even God on their side) is that they both seem like muscley man-sized children. Just stop talking, you want to say. Stop telling us about your feelings. Stop trying to have the last word. Go home and ring your mum/dad/sister/brother.

We're still mesmerised as to what grudge it is that Ramsay-Peaty bears his mother. Surely it can't be her refusing to allow herself to be styled for his wedding (code for hoisted up a class and made to look like someone richer, thinner and more sophisticated)? That is rumoured to be the reason the Peatys, bar his sister, stayed away on the day — they took exception to Caroline Peaty being made over in the manner of a polished Ramsay circle guest.

Anyway. Back to that other gigantic feud, between Brooklyn and Nicola and Brooklyn's parents. Things had gone a bit quiet in the past month, but at the weekend the pass-agg machine ground into action again as Brooklyn and Nicola met up with "Uncle" Elton — Brooklyn's godfather — on Elton's yacht in Nice. Presumably Uncle Elts has been given permission by his old mates to keep lines of communication open. Maybe he's miked up and all their conversations were being relayed directly to the Beckhams' yacht in Ibiza. Still, it's yet more material for the How Not to Build Bridges school. And I have to say, Brooklyn is showing some real promise in this area.

Ariana Grande and the 'public scrutiny' that's taken its toll

The singer is 'stepping back' and won't appear on the London stage after all. Are her heavy schedule and criticism of her weight behind it, asks Claire Cohen

With ten No 1 singles, six No 1 albums, an Oscar nomination, three Grammys and 363 million devoted followers on Instagram, you'd think Ariana Grande might be at the absolute peak of her powers. Instead, the 33-year-old singer, who has been performing since the age of eight and is in the midst of the international *Eternal Sunshine* tour — which culminates with ten nights at the O2 this month — has just pulled out of her highly anticipated theatre debut in London.

"Ariana will be taking a step back from visibility," a spokesperson told People magazine of Grande's decision to walk away from a revival of Stephen Sondheim's *Sunday in the Park with George*, due to open at the Barbican next year. She is, they added, "taking a much-deserved break from public-facing work and appearances, which has led to endless, ongoing public scrutiny".

Oof, so is it our fault? Certainly, deliberation over Grande's weight (not all of it genuine concern) has been the soundtrack to her career in recent years, often overshadowing her work. Only this week, the British model Charli Howard — who has spoken publicly about her struggle with eating disorders — criticised Grande's management after the release of a music video for the song *Petal*.

"I think it is absolutely appalling, from both a moral and capitalistic standpoint, to have released these videos and an album when this person needs psychiatric help and hospitalisation," Howard wrote on Instagram, expressing concern that some of the singer's impressionable young fans (who call themselves Arianators) were defending her as "healthy" or just losing her "puppy fat". "The teams involved should be absolutely ashamed."

Grande, it should be emphasised, hasn't said that her retreat has anything to do with her health, and Howard has received death threats since her post, such is the intensity of the debate about the singer's changing appearance — the ethics of speculating over something so personal and private, versus the duty of care in not saying anything at all.

In 2023 Grande posted a rare three-minute video on TikTok asking for the speculation to stop. "There are many different ways to look healthy and beautiful... You never know what someone is going through. Even if you are coming from a loving place and a caring place, that person is probably working on it or has a support system that they are working on it with. So be gentle with each other and with yourselves," she said.

What we do know for sure is that the *Wicked* star has had a difficult few years. In May 2017 she had just finished the encore of a sold-out show at Manchester Arena when Salman Abedi detonated a bomb in the foyer, killing 22 concertgoers, including eight-year-old Saffie Roussos, and injuring more than 200 others. A benefit concert two weeks later at Old Trafford, which the singer organised, raised more than £10 million for the families of victims. Grande choked with sobs as she sang *Over the Rainbow* in their memory.

Fifteen months later, in September 2018, her musical collaborator and ex-boyfriend, the rapper Mac Miller, died of an accidental overdose. At the time, Grande called her grief "all-

GETTY IMAGES

Ariana Grande at the Golden Globe awards in January and, below, on stage in 2014, aged 21

consuming" after years of trying to support his sobriety, yet she was forced to turn off comments on her Instagram account after trolls blamed her for his relapse and death. Amazing how it's always the woman's fault, isn't it?

By then Grande was engaged to the comedian and serial Hollywood dater Pete Davidson after a whirlwind romance (they started dating in May 2018 and reportedly decided to marry in June), which included matching tattoos and a pet pig named Piggy Smallz. But the relationship ended a month after Miller's death, amid Grande cancelling appearances on *Saturday Night Live* and a cancer benefit gala. "Given the events of the past couple of years, Ariana is going to take some much-needed time to heal and mend," her representative said.

Her interviews from that period tell the story of a young woman struggling. "My anxiety has anxiety. I've always had anxiety. I've never really spoken about it because I thought everyone had it," she told British Vogue in 2018.

And while she has always refused to make the Manchester attack about herself — "it's not my trauma, it's those families'," she told American Vogue in 2019 — she did admit to suffering with PTSD in its wake.

"I have a lot that I still need to process myself and will probably never be ready to talk about," she told Vogue. "For a long time I didn't want to talk to anyone about anything, because I didn't want to think about anything. I kind of just wanted to bury myself in work and not focus on the real stuff, because I couldn't believe it was real."

Work she has. Indeed, Grande has hardly paused since she was a child, the daughter of Edward, a graphic designer, and Joan, the CEO of a marine communications equipment company, raised in an upmarket gated community in Florida. Her parents split when she was eight, after which she became estranged from her father for a time. She has spoken about having to persuade her parents to reconcile and resume friendly terms when she was in her early twenties.

A young Grande threw herself into performing. After years in local theatre, aged 14, she landed a role in the Broadway musical *13,* and was subsequently cast as Cat Valentine on the Nickelodeon tween shows *Victorious* and *Sam & Cat*, which made her a star and gave her a very engaged and enthusiastic young fanbase.

In her spare time (what spare time, I hear you ask), she made YouTube videos of herself singing covers — think Whitney Houston, Adele, Mariah Carey — eventually releasing her debut album, *Yours Truly*, in 2013 when she was 20. It debuted at No 1 in the US Billboard 200 chart; since then she has worked at a relentless pace, putting out eight albums, all certified platinum, and toured the world four times.

Not to mention that since the Manchester attack she has defied the apolitical stance of your typical pop singer to speak out in favour of gun control, is vocally pro-LGBTQ+, and in June asked the White House to stop using her songs after it did so to promote its immigration policy. "Please do not use my music in relation to this barbaric, inhumane, heinous nonsense," she commented on the administration's TikTok post, showing people being handcuffed by border control agents.

Somehow she has also found time to star as Glinda in both *Wicked* films — for which she received an Oscar nomination for best supporting actress — which were made back-to-back in 2022. The strain of that gruelling filming schedule, during which Grande relocated to England, was partly blamed for her 2024 divorce from Dalton Gomez, an estate agent whom she had married three years earlier in an intimate post-lockdown ceremony in Montecito, California (they had a prenup: he got a £1.25 million payout).

In July 2023, as their split was made public, Grande was revealed to be dating her *Wicked* co-star Ethan Slater, a relationship which quickly became controversial thanks to the timing of Slater's split from his wife, Lilly Jay, the mother of his newborn son, that same year. Naturally, Grande copped more of the criticism than Slater. The couple kept a low profile, rarely appearing in public together, and reportedly broke up quietly this year.

It's a lot, isn't it? Little wonder that Grande has mostly pulled back from using her social media accounts to share personal information, largely posting anodyne black-and-white portraits of herself and her dogs, clips from her tour or promotional images for *Focker-in-Law* — the next instalment in the *Meet the Parents* franchise — in which she'll star alongside Robert De Niro and Ben Stiller in November this year. Whether she'll join the publicity tour for the film remains to be seen.

"You know, I've been a specimen in a petri dish since I was 16 or 17. So, I have heard it all," Grande said last year. "I've heard every version of what's wrong with me. And then you fix it, and it's wrong for different reasons. From what you're wearing, to your body, to your face, to your everything."

A woman in the public eye who feels she can't win? Who'd have thought it? The only question now is whether we can allow Grande her long-needed break in peace.

Surprise! Gwyneth's on TikTok now

And her first post is typically unrelatable, says Charlie Gowans

How does a 53-year-old keep up with the kids on TikTok? For Gen X-er Gwyneth Paltrow's debut on Gen Z's favourite app this weekend, she hammed up the generation gap and her apparent lack of TikTok nous with a round-the-world series of video clips.

She opens with the phrase "Yeah I'm coming right now, I'm just doing a TikTok" while up a mountain, then repeats words to that effect: on a boat, in French beside a French bridge, topless in bed, into a headset on a helicopter, in Italian from a lavender garden, on a boat again, in a museum, naked in the bath, on a plane, from a market in an unspecified European piazza, sotto voce in an art gallery... you get the idea.

Tone deaf? It's certainly not relatable, but Paltrow is self-aware enough to have considered that tone in advance, and when it comes to TikTok, aspiration sells better than relatability.

Gwyneth Paltrow. Top: making her TikTok debut

It's an interesting moment for Paltrow to choose to join TikTok. Without her own profile there to lead the narrative, the search results for her name centre on her most recent sponsored content — shilling luxury flats in Israel.

Meanwhile on Instagram, where she has 9.1 million followers, the backlash was harder to find and probably never seen by her older fanbase, since it was a long scroll down from the top posts of nostalgia over her Noughties red-carpet style and Paltrow's own posts sharing her Goop skincare routine or cooking #BoyfriendBreakfast for her partner.

She hasn't yet managed to bump those exposé posts, but with just shy of 10,000 likes on her post in two days, the TikTok rebrand is definitely under way. Social media users have short memories, and an insatiable appetite to buy the lifestyles they watch online.

This is the platform where real money can be made selling appetite-suppressing lollipops, online workouts, shapewear and protein popcorn — all product lines promoted by the Kardashians — to teenagers.

The 40-plus anti-ageing, vaginal egg and cashmere jumper demographic has made Paltrow a multimillionaire (though she was also born into wealth), but TikTok Shop has made the Kardashians billionaires. Whether or not generations Z and Alpha have the deep pockets to buy into Brand Paltrow remains to be seen. But I'm sure she'll find something to sell them — and perhaps launch her own brand dynasty, with her Gen Z children to help her reach her new audience.

health

Suffering from back pain? You're probably treating it all wrong

Dr Mark Porter

The older you get as a doctor, the more you learn, both through your contact with patients and, as bits of you start to go wrong, through personal experience. Today's subject — back pain — is a case in point. Not only have I cared for thousands of people with back trouble, but I have been there myself.

Most adults will experience back pain at some stage, often many times, and it exacts a considerable toll, not just on the individual and the NHS but employers and government coffers too. That burden isn't helped by the way we manage it.

Despite long-established UK guidelines on best practice, which have just been updated by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice), we are still making the same mistakes. Put simply, too many people are doing the wrong thing, taking the wrong medication or having the wrong investigations.

A recent study of consultations at a GP surgery in Glasgow found that guidelines were not followed in six out of ten cases. It was a small sample and impossible to extrapolate to the whole of the UK, but it reflects data from other studies, including another recent one based on emergency department attendance in the US. This found similar divergence from the guidelines, with one in five people given opioid painkillers such as codeine and morphine (these should be avoided in back pain where possible) and too many (nearly 40 per cent) having x-rays that were unlikely to help.

There are lots of different causes of acute (less than three months) back pain, some far more serious than others, so it is hard to generalise and it's vital to look for "red flag" symptoms (see panel) that should prompt urgent investigation. However, the vast majority of cases get better on their own with time. Here are some of the recommendations from the latest Nice guidance that should help that natural healing process.

Avoid acupuncture, supportive belts, corrective shoe insoles, corsets and Tens (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) machines, and don't rely on paracetamol. It's generally harmless if you stick to the right dose, but research shows that it doesn't work for this type of pain. Nice also recommends avoiding opioid painkillers except where other drugs don't help. Opioids often don't work that well, and may even result in worse long-term outcomes, not least opioid dependence, which can leave people still in pain but addicted and sedated.

Nice also advises against medicines to help with short-term nerve pain such as the old-fashioned antidepressant amitriptyline and newer drugs such as pregabalin and gabapentin (amitriptyline is still used to treat chronic pain). For sciatica — nerve pain, typically in the leg — we should not be using diazepam.

So what should you take? The painkillers of choice for acute back pain are the non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). If you are self-treating it will be ibuprofen, which is available over the counter, but if under the care of a doctor it will probably be naproxen.

NSAIDs are not suitable for everyone, and can cause serious side-effects, including kidney problems and life-threatening stomach bleeds, so they are often prescribed alongside something to protect the stomach, such as the acid-suppressing drug omeprazole. If buying over the counter do check with your pharmacist if you are over 65, have kidney, stomach or heart problems, or take blood pressure tablets, water tablets or anticoagulants.

Do not expect an x-ray or scan. There are situations where they are important but, in general, they don't help and, in the case of x-rays, expose you to unnecessary radiation. MRIs don't involve ionising radiation so are safer, but are expensive, often pick up irrelevant wear and tear, and are not always helpful.

> **Opiods can leave people still in pain but addicted and sedated**

Don't push for surgery. This is rarely offered in acute back pain but can be an option for some people, including those with severe sciatica. I underwent a microdiscectomy 20 years ago having been in agony for months with a weak left leg. It worked a treat, but long-term outcomes for those who have this type of surgery for a prolapsed disc are often no better than they are for those who heal naturally, so avoid it if you can. I still have occasional sciatica now.

Try to remain active and at work. Resting for a day or two if the pain is severe is OK, but any longer than that can lead to weakness and slower recovery. As a rule people who remain active, and at work, tend to fare better. And consider an active exercise programme.

To summarise: if you develop back pain after some DIY next weekend, assuming you don't have any of the red flags, current advice would be to take ibuprofen, stay as active as possible and head off to work as usual on Monday. Most cases improve gradually within 4–6 weeks, but if yours hasn't, see your GP.

You can read the latest Nice guidance at nice.org.uk/guidance/ng59

When to call your doctor's surgery

Most cases of back pain require no specific treatment, but it can be a symptom of underlying problems ranging from inflammatory arthritis and infection to fractures and cancer. Here are some symptoms that warrant a call to your GP.

- **New type of pain in someone under 20 or over 55**
- **Pain following trauma such as a fall**
- **Pain that is constant and not relieved by rest**
- **Affecting the upper half of the spine rather than the lower half**
- **A history of cancer or prolonged steroid use**
- **Feeling generally unwell or having a raised temperature**
- **Unexplained weight loss**
- **Seek help urgently or go to A&E if you develop any of these as they can indicate serious nerve compression: progressive weakness in the legs, an abnormal gait, difficulty passing urine, loss of bowel control, or tingling or numbness in the saddle area between the legs.**

How to lose a midlife paunch (like Andy Burnham's)

Despite all his jogging, the PM can't quite shift his belly fat. It's a problem for many fiftysomethings, men especially. Peta Bee seeks the experts' best advice

At 56, Andy Burnham has avoided many of the physical curses that plague men in their middle years. He is slim and fit, having run several marathons and completed the Great Manchester Run 10km multiple times — most recently in 53min 15sec, a respectable time for his age, according to Runner's World.

You don't achieve times like Burnham has without training, but despite his efforts the new PM has found attention directed to his barely-there mini-paunch, somewhat unfairly dubbed the "Burnham belly". It's a plight familiar to midlifers who spend hours at the gym only to find their Lycra T-shirt still taut over a stubborn bulge. Why?

Hormones play a part. Men have low levels of oestrogen, a hormone that directs fat storage to the hips and thighs rather than the waistline, which means they typically gain weight around the middle at any age.

This natural lack of subcutaneous fat deposits in the hips and thighs means any excess fat is stored inside the body around the vital organs or as visible belly fat. It gets worse as activity levels and muscle mass drop from their forties onwards.

"You can't decide where fat comes off first with a man, but you can accurately predict where it comes off last," says Scott Harrison, a personal trainer and founder of the Six Pack Revolution, a body transformation programme. "A mini paunch in the lower belly is basically a survival pouch where we naturally store fat for emergencies and it is always the last bit to disappear."

It is also a sign that the balance of a fitness regime may benefit from some tweaking. Burnham does a lot of running, which is great for reducing overall weight and for stress relief, but less helpful in flattening the tummy. "When we run at a steady pace we become efficient at fat burning — in other words our bodies get used to it," says the performance coach Dalton Wong. "It helps to add resistance training to the mix."

Diet and stress — of which we can imagine Burnham has plenty — contribute to belly fat, but genes also play a part. "Make no mistake that the prime minster is in really good shape for a man approaching 60," Wong says. "There are changes that can help to get rid of a mini-paunch, but sometimes it just comes down to genetics and that's a battle you can't win easily." Here's what to try:

Excess sugar and UPFs need to go

Reducing added sugars will help to shrink a paunch. "Sugar causes a spike in insulin which encourages fat storage, especially around the middle," Harrison says. It's boring, but getting your sugar fix from natural sources, such as fruit, is the safest bet. "Bananas, dates and other fruit are great," he says. "Just make sure you consume them with some protein and fat, such as Greek yoghurt, to prevent a sharp sugar spike."

Foods with added sugars trigger cravings for unhealthy ultra-processed foods such as crisps, pies and biscuits. A Brazilian study involving more than 22,000 people found people who ate the most UPFs had a 30 per cent greater risk of developing abdominal obesity than those who consumed the least. Best avoided.

Manage your stress levels

Levels of the hormone cortisol rise and fall naturally throughout the day, but when they are chronically high it

COVER: GARY OAKLEY/GETTY IMAGES; BELOW: IOANNIS ALEXOPOULOS/LNP

Andy Burnham

encourages fat storage round the abdomen. "Cortisol is a blocker of fat loss and helps our bodies to hold on to fat for survival," Harrison says.

Yoga, outdoor swimming and Nordic walking with poles all have proven stress-busting, mood-boosting effects. Running is another option and is obviously Burnham's stress-reducer of choice, although long-distance marathon training and high-intensity exercises such as those featured in Hyrox, the increasingly popular indoor fitness race, can provide another source of stress for the body.

"Moderate running distances are excellent for the body and mind," Harrison says. "It's better for fat-burning to do something like 20 minutes of alternating one-minute hard effort, one-minute jogging than an hour of steady running — or sometimes add some uphills and downhills instead."

Mix in some resistance work

There's no escaping weights in middle age and the NHS recommends that adults do muscle-strengthening activities at least twice a week — a target missed by roughly 40 per cent of British men in their fifties.

"When a man is pretty skinny elsewhere but has a little belly fat, as Burnham has, it suggests muscle loss, or sarcopenia, is to blame and lifting weights will help," Harrison says.

Stronger muscles enhance your metabolism, boost fat-burning and improve your posture to reduce a paunch. "Running gets your legs strong, but Burnham would benefit from adding some weighted lateral lunges as running works muscles in a forward motion only," Wong says.

"Adding upper-body exercises such as cable and upright rows and thrusters will balance things out and I'd always recommend compound moves such as push-ups and weighted squats and deadlifts for prime fat-burning and core strength."

> **Beer is one of the worst offenders for a paunch**

Improve your posture

You can train seven days a week and if you don't stand up straight, the effect on your paunch will be minimal. Correct your posture and you'll be amazed at the visible difference. "This is a big and relatively easy-to-fix issue for middle-aged men, usually exacerbated by a loss of muscle mass in supporting muscles that exaggerate the look of a pot belly," Harrison says. "Andy Burnham is quite round-shouldered and just by lifting his chest and eyes up a bit, his stomach would instantly look flatter."

Cut down on alcohol...

Fredrik Karpe, professor of metabolic medicine at the University of Oxford, recently showed there is a direct link between alcohol and abdominal fat or a "beer belly". "Alcohol contains unwanted calories that can lead to weight gain, particularly around the middle, and switches the brain into starvation mode, sending signals that you are hungry even if you've already eaten," Harrison says.

He has a strict "rule of 100 per cent no alcohol whatsoever" for those signing up to his 12-week six-pack plan but says a more moderate approach is fine longer term. "No amount of alcohol is good for you or your belly," he says. "But I enjoy a drink when the sun is out — the key is to keep it under control."

...and limit the pints of beer

Burnham, a diehard Everton fan, likes a pint, especially before watching matches, and has recently said it is "wrong" that spectators could not enjoy a pint during matches. Is even this too much? Unfortunately, beer is among the worst offenders for a paunch.

"In terms of alcohol levels, it is lower than spirits and that's a good thing," Harrison says. "But the quantity of liquid and gas and the 200 calories in a pint make you bloated." Beer, ales and ciders all contain carbs that increase blood sugar levels when you drink them, potentially raising hunger levels later on. "If you are trying to lose your belly, drinking 4-5 pints a week or more is the worst thing to do," Harrison says.

thesixpackrevolution.com; daltonwong.co.uk

Ask the experts

What can I do about my chronic cough?

Surinder Birring, professor of respiratory medicine at King's College London and consultant respiratory physician at King's College Hospital

Anyone with a long-lasting cough should seek medical evaluation promptly. Initial checks should rule out warning signs of serious illness, such as coughing up blood or unexplained weight loss, which can point to lung cancer. Certain blood pressure medications, particularly ACE inhibitors such as Ramipril, are also common culprits and worth reviewing with a GP. Smokers and vapers are urged to seek support to quit, and a simple chest x-ray can help identify underlying lung disease.

When these steps don't resolve the problem, the cause may be "cough hypersensitivity syndrome", also known as refractory chronic cough. This condition involves overactive cough-triggering nerves and amplified signalling in the brain, and it disproportionately affects women in their fifties. Triggers can include cold air, talking, eating and perfumes. Symptoms of throat irritation, such as tickling, are common.

Treatment options include the medication gefapixant (though not widely available), which blocks airway cough receptors, and drugs like amitriptyline, gabapentin and morphine, which dampen the brain's cough signal.

Morphine carries a risk of addiction and should be reserved for the most severe cases, typically being prescribed only after other therapies have been tried and failed to bring relief. Speech and physiotherapy-led cough control therapy also shows strong results, especially alongside medication.

Professor Alyn Morice, head of respiratory medicine at Hull York Medical School

The first thing is to realise that it is a common condition, but the problem is that most healthcare professionals are ignorant of it. While it can occur at any age, it mostly afflicts middle-aged women whose lives are often ruined by embarrassment, anxiety and social isolation. Half the patients are incontinent. It's a disease which is usually mistakenly diagnosed as chest infections, asthma or COPD.

It has a characteristic pattern. Cough on rising in the morning. Cough with meals and on phonation, particularly laughing. Cough on lying down or bending. It usually abates when the patient eventually goes to sleep. Throat clearing and voice change are frequent, but each patient has a different pattern. It is caused by hypersensitivity of the vagus nerve and its projections to the brain.

I use promotility agents (drugs that stimulate muscles in the digestive tract) and ultimately low-dose morphine, which inhibits the tickle in most patients. Gefapixant is the only licenced medicine for this disease, but it is not available on the NHS.

health

The biggest health myths? Well, that sauna won't help

Don't be fooled by the wellness industry hype, says the exercise scientist Dr Nick Tiller. From mouth tape to ice baths, it's mostly nonsense. By Anna Maxted

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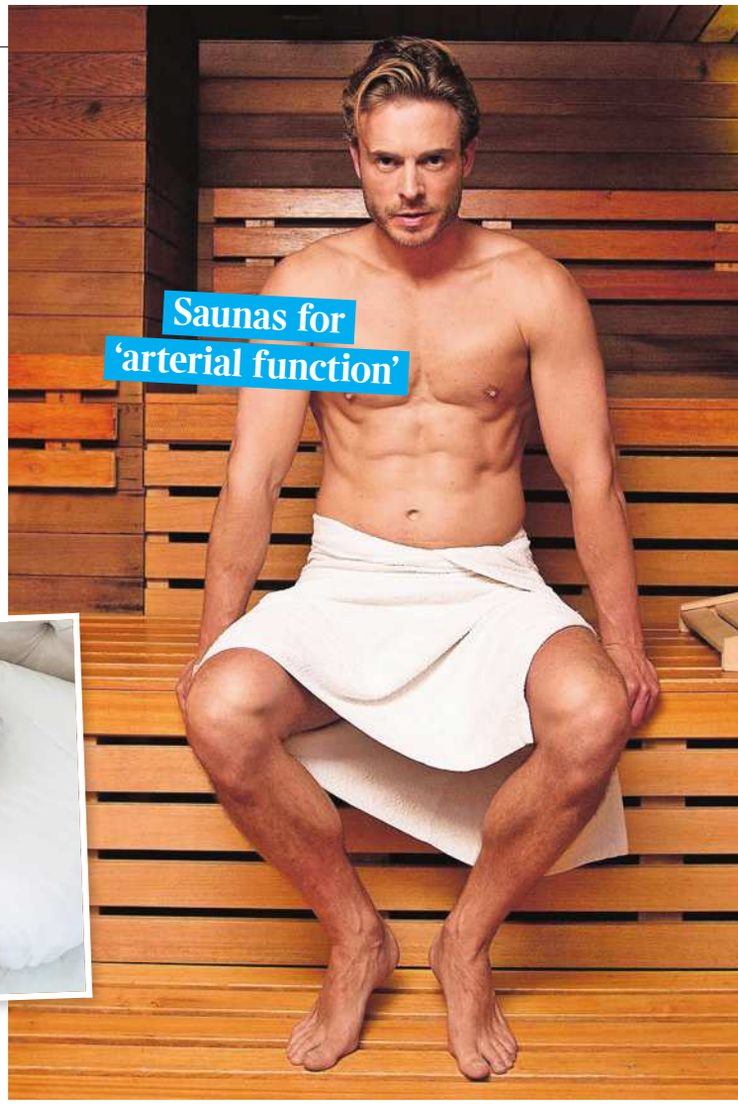


At first sight you might foolishly mistake Dr Nick Tiller, an exercise scientist and respiratory physiologist, for your average online fitness bro. He has that shaven-headed, full-bearded, heavily muscled under a snug T-shirted look. But while he does spend more than ten hours a week in the gym ("it's what I love to do — it sounds ridiculous when you put it in hours"), that's where the similarity ends.

Tiller, 44, is a research associate at the Lundquist Institute, Harbor-UCLA Medical Center, and an associate editor for the International Journal of Sport Nutrition and Exercise Metabolism. He has worked with athletes on the UK's Olympic programme and alongside patients with obstructive lung disease. He's a stickler for robust data, rigorous science and principled medical expertise.

Trouble is, many others are not. He was horrified when a well-meaning family friend recommended that Tiller's grandfather, who'd had a stroke, take homeopathic digitalis instead of his heart medication. Unfortunately scientists, as well as civilians, can get it wrong. Thanks to Tiller's query to the editor of a scientific journal, a published study claiming that vitamin D boosted cardiovascular fitness by 27 per cent was retracted. His latest book, *The Health and Wellness Lie: Exposing the Hype, Hacks and Hidden Agendas of the Wellbeing Machine*, won't be popular with many.

Among those he takes aim at are chiropractors (a known risk is "a tear in the artery supplying blood to the brain"), acupuncturists ("Qi has never been measured or observed — nor have meridians"), kinesiology tape ("placebo tape"), oxygenated water (as if "a bottled gimmick could meaningfully improve on the respiratory system"), Deepak Chopra (big on "word salad"), the billionaire youth-seeker Bryan Johnson (achieved nothing that can't be attained by consistent training and eating well) and the podcaster Dr Andrew Huberman ("Goop for bros").

Tiller says he's not a naysaying cynic. He's just angry at how we're swayed by the hype of a multitrillion-pound industry. He *wants* people to reach their health and wellness goals, which they won't if they're bamboozled, or worse.

"I try to help them take some of the power back. If you actually want to get healthy and fit, you do your yoga, you go walking, you maybe go to the gym, you play tennis, you move, you eat well, you don't smoke — that stuff is worth a 100 years of all the other nonsense."

Sauna, anyone? How to know if a wellness claim is exaggerated

In 2015 researchers developed a method for quantifying susceptibility to snake oil, Tiller reports — a Bullshit Receptivity Scale. It included obvious rot such as "Intention is the knowledge of inspiration and of us". But often a claim sewn together from half-truths or thin data is harder to detect or debunk. Trouble is, "We have evolved to be economic with our decision-making. Don't take at face value what you're being told until you get some more evidence." This might sound obvious — until you read what he says about, for instance, saunas.

There's an oft-cited Finnish study which found that frequent sauna use was associated with about a 60 per cent drop in the rate of fatal heart disease and all-cause mortality, lower blood pressure, inflammation and risk of dementia. But correlation is not causation. The study controlled for BMI, smoking and alcohol, Tiller says, but not "broader diet, medications, genetics, mental health, sleep, healthcare access or sociocultural factors".

He cites a 2019 study comparing the cardiovascular function of people sitting in a sauna with others resting in normal temperatures. It found "no differences in arterial function". At best, "There's some evidence that regular saunas might have some modest cardiovascular benefits."

> "Loads of evidence now shows that ice bathing actually slows recovery

Do I have to give up taking ice baths?

Chill. "There's absolutely nothing wrong with ice bathing and using saunas," he says. Saunas are excellent for relaxing and Tiller has tried cold water swimming. "It sharpens and awakens the senses and makes you feel great, because you get a rush of endorphins." It can benefit your mental health. "The problem is that it's a slippery slope from that to then claiming that ice bathing can reduce inflammation, that it can accelerate muscle recovery."

First, "anti-inflammatory" is a lazy wellness buzzword, used as if acute and chronic inflammation were the same thing. Second, "loads of evidence now shows that ice bathing actually slows recovery from hard training because it reduces muscle protein synthesis and blunts the anabolic signalling processes in the muscle that we need to recover," Tiller says. "There has to be an inflammatory response for the body to respond and adapt to the training. If you suppress that too much, you suppress your adaptation." Plus, "some swear by [ice baths] for warding off colds and 'boosting' the immune system — and there's no evidence. The problem is we're so eager for these shortcuts that we buy into these extravagant claims."

Mouth taping, knee taping — which have you fallen for?

I tell Tiller that my son returned from a physiotherapist appointment, his knee decorated in fluorescent tape. Kinesiology tape is "a wonderful case study", Tiller says. By targeting top athletes and professional footballers, he says, there was a point about a decade ago when every major event seemed to include a sportsman with their knees, thighs and arms covered in the stuff. "It's no coincidence that the tape is brightly coloured. It creates the 'exposure effect'. The more you see of something the more you associate it with validity and credibility."

Manufacturers say it "improves blood and lymphatic flow, which helps to reduce inflammation and supports healing". Scientific research is yet to establish benefits beyond providing "a bit of extra stability", according to Tiller.

Mouth-taping overnight, too, has been popular with athletes, convincing many to follow suit. Tiller says: "Mouth taping is this idea that if you obligate nasal breathing it can help to open up the lungs and improve oxygen efficiency." The confusing element? "There's a nugget of scientific truth to it, in that nitric oxide is produced in the nasal cavity and upper airways and it's a potent bronchodilator." He notes:

"In some patient populations there are some studies showing that it might be able to improve oxygen efficiency." However, "in healthy people there is no deficit to correct".

Check what products doctors and scientists endorse

When a doctor or a scientist endorses something it's a potential conflict of interest, Tiller says. How can they give impartial advice if they're being paid? He notes that the neuroscientist and podcaster Dr Andrew Huberman, for instance, has endorsed dietary supplements, hydration beverages, coffee-makers, activity-trackers, mental health services, mattresses and sleep systems, blood-testing services, red-light therapy, red-lens eyewear, cold plunges, deer meat and herbal infusion beverages. Tiller says that "he has commodified science".

Huberman's justification for his extensive podcast sponsorships is that advertising revenue is what allows the podcast to remain free and accessible to the public. Furthermore, Huberman Lab's "Sponsorship Philosophy" is to "only work with brands whose products we personally use and love".

Still, declared sponsorships are one thing. Tiller discovered a particularly insidious ruse when approached last year by a supplement company wanting him to become "an unofficial brand ambassador". They were soon to launch a range of "mitochondrial optimisers". "In return for a tidy sum," he says, "they wanted me to *not* mention the brand, *not* talk about the product, just in any interviews I gave and on my social media to inform the public how important it is to enhance mitochondrial function. That way my audience is primed for when the product is aggressively marketed later that year." Surprise — Tiller said no. Plus, he notes, "supplements are less regulated than dog food".

So what is good nutritional and fitness advice?

For the best results, what time of day should we exercise? "It doesn't matter," Tiller says. This was confirmed by a 2023 meta-analysis published in Sports Medicine Open. "The most powerful form of movement for weight loss is unstructured, incidental activity" — non-exercise activity thermogenesis (Neat) — he adds. Increase it by taking the stairs, gardening, doing housework and "active commuting" — a brisk 20 or 30-minute walk to work. The Norwegians call it "transport training".

Meanwhile, be wary of fit-fluencers. In 2021 researchers in Brazil audited nearly 500 Instagram posts from fitness influencers. Only 13 posts (3 per cent) made claims backed by evidence. And talking of social media misinformation, Tiller corrects a few fallacies on protein. "It won't build muscle without exercise, nor will it convert fat into muscle." However, "eat too much of it and, like any other excess energy, it can be converted to fat. You just need to meet your protein demands." For regular exercisers and older adults, that's typically 1-1.5g/kg bodyweight. "There's no real benefit to taking in more."

As for "bro science culture" myths such as that raw eggs or fish guts provide superior protein? He says sternly: "It's all just nonsense."

***The Health and Wellness Lie* by Dr Nick Tiller (Bloomsbury Green Tree £22) is out now**

My fear of being sick was so extreme that I had an abortion

I wanted to have children but my emetophobia was overwhelming.

By Bryony Twydle

It's the strangest thing, wanting to have children while being terrified of becoming pregnant. I've spent the past 16 years pursuing my career as an actor. My twenties were spent doing auditions and part-time jobs. I've been a barista, a baker and a children's entertainer. I've decorated a Scottish castle for Christmas and made floral arrangements for the Kuwaiti royal family. While all this was going on, many of my friends were settling down and having children. I wanted them too but I assumed they would somehow magically happen after I had a couple of big movies under my belt. Wishful thinking.

I met my husband at university. We got married in 2021, when I was 31, in the midst of the pandemic — a small 12-person wedding, I wore a hot pink suit. It was perfect. It seemed to me that I'd run out of excuses. The career was going well but I had by no means given up all my part-time jobs. Still, we decided we should start trying for a baby, or at least "not not-trying", but we didn't seem to have any luck.

Then, in January 2024, I found out that my grandmother had been diagnosed with breast cancer and my father was diagnosed with bowel cancer. As my world collapsed around me, the cherry on top was that I discovered I was pregnant.

It should have been a welcome relief from all the family turmoil, but there was one problem: I have emetophobia — a fear of being sick or those around me being sick. It started when I was a child and I was locked in my mum's car while my friend projectile vomited across the seats. It probably lasted just a few minutes, but to my eight-year-old self it felt like a lifetime. For the 28 years since, I've feared being sick or people around me vomiting. As a child I spent many a car ride with my fingers in my ears crying while my brother had car sickness. Any journey we went on, I watched him like a hawk for signs: was he yawning, did he want the window open, was I going to be trapped again?

No one likes being sick, nor do people enjoy dealing with vomit, even when it's their loved ones who are unwell. But most people won't be crying, hyperventilating and running in the opposite direction. For decades I have lived in fear of making a fool out of myself because of this condition, feeling that I cannot support others if they are unwell, and that I am ill-equipped to cope when I feel sick.

Years of safety behaviours and avoidance have occurred: if norovirus is going round, crack out the hand sanitiser; a school trip to the Somme on a ferry? Too dangerous; a day out at Thorpe Park? No chance. And as far as nights out at uni went, I would always manage to stop myself from getting too drunk for fear of being sick. I somehow managed to avoid throwing up for 24 years. I spent most of my life trying to keep myself as safe as possible, and the pregnancy couldn't have made me feel less secure.

Of course, everyone around me was thrilled with the news. My parents told me: "You've no idea the light you've brought to such a dark time." I felt a pressure that they were relying on me and this tiny little thing growing inside me to be the answer to all of life's problems. But I was terrified of what was going on in my body. The hormones were raging, and I was consumed with the overwhelming fear of when the morning sickness might begin. And it was hard to tell if it had begun or whether the nausea I was feeling was in my head. I felt as if I was losing my grip on reality.

After a few days of no sleep, panic attacks and ferociously chewing mints until I broke a tooth, it was becoming apparent that I wasn't doing so well. I didn't want to say it out loud, but I was starting to feel that I couldn't do this.

I began having dark thoughts, things I didn't want to share with my partner for fear of making him more worried than he already was. I'd had bouts of depression in the past, and although I thought I was hiding it, I clearly wasn't. My husband suggested I should visit my GP.

I explained to her how I was having suicidal thoughts, the nausea was unbearable, I wasn't sleeping, that this felt like an uphill battle I couldn't get on top of. My GP told me I was too early in the pregnancy — seven weeks — and she couldn't give me anything. She said I should eat something or chew on ginger. I left feeling worse than when I went in. Another few days went past and I was waking up every three hours in fight-or-flight mode, wishing for everything to end. I felt that I was letting everyone down and it would be better if I wasn't here at all.

I looked at my husband. This was killing him. He was exhausted from managing me and my panic attacks, and from me waking him up constantly needing him to bring me toasted bagels to manage the nausea. My mum was burnt out and dealing with her own worries at home. I felt like a burden, that I couldn't be there for my family in their time of need.

A week later my husband looked me in the eye and said: "You don't have to do this. This can all go away." Having his support and knowing that he understood the pain I was experiencing helped us to make the decision that I needed to terminate.

It's one of the hardest decisions I've ever had to make, having always dreamt that I would have children, but my mental health condition had defeated me. My parents really struggled with my decision but were incredibly supportive.

Since it all happened, I think they have a better understanding of emetophobia and how much of a struggle this has always been for me. There's very open communication with my family to try to keep me safe and mentally healthy should I become pregnant again.

We haven't been short of bad news since then. We lost both my grandmas, and my dad still has cancer. After two years of seemingly endless sessions of therapy, from cognitive behavioural therapy and hypnotherapy to emotion-focused therapy, do I feel that I am any more equipped? I'm not sure.

I certainly feel that I can manage my anxiety better. I have an amazing therapist, and found Dr Nighat Arif, a doctor specialising in women's health, whom I first visited after my termination. I needed help before 12 weeks but was told I couldn't be given anything to support me. Thanks to Dr Arif I know that isn't true. There is extensive data that indicates that there are safe options women can take, even in that first trimester. And I have been introduced to Pregnancy Sickness Support, a charity that supports women during this time.

We're told that during the first trimester we should stay quiet and not tell anyone, despite that time often being when you need the most support. Our attitudes need to change. I hear so often that many women and men suffer from emetophobia and feel unable to talk about it. I hope that if you're reading this and you have it, you will know that you're not alone.

Maybe you will be a lot braver than me. It's hard not to imagine what might have been. I'm now 36, and my husband and I have decided that we are going to try again. I know I can't plan for a perfect pregnancy, but I do know I'm more equipped than I ever have been. This time I have to have faith that it will be different.

MICHAEL LECKIE FOR THE TIMES

Bryony Twydle

> **"I began having dark thoughts, things I didn't want to share with my partner**

Sea bass for £450, steak for the dog: my life as a private chef

Whatever the clients want, I make it happen. Even if it involves illogical diets and shipping in caviar

GETTY IMAGES

I trained at the Dorchester in London 30 years ago then became the head chef of a restaurant abroad that won a Michelin star. I returned to the capital and worked at a Bond Street jeweller as executive chef on £45,000. My brief was to cook for the owners and their guests. If you bought a £1 million diamond ring, I might cook you lunch.

There was an unlimited budget. When it was truffle season I ordered a £500 bottle of burgundy and £2,000 worth of white truffles — there were ten for lunch and they wanted one white truffle each (and fresh pasta to slice it over). When the two owners wanted different meals from their two favourite restaurants I got into the company Bentley in my chef's whites and picked them up on silver platters. This was before Uber Eats.

Then I set up a private chef business. Word of mouth, rich wives scrolling Instagram and my agent is how people find me now.

There can be as little as 36 hours' notice to go anywhere in the world, but usually it's Europe — St Tropez, Mykonos, St Moritz, Gstaad. They send a car to take me to Farnborough airport and I bring my knives and chef's whites.

Often I'm not told the clients' names. It's usually anonymous rich people in banking (celebrities tend to have their own teams) from France, Germany, Russia and England (although fewer English just now — they seem to be on a budget).

At Farnborough clients are welcoming then dismissive. They look you up and down and see how you dress. I go for quiet luxury — Gucci without the logo and always an elegant bag. In the private jet I'm at the back with the nanny — although I've been kicked off one aircraft to make space for a dog before and lumped with a 15-hour, three-train journey home.

It's not always glamorous. Sometimes it's British Airways or easyJet with very early flights. Although yes, the villas are incredible. They cost at least £50,000 a week to rent: giant white spaces, Roche Bobois sofas, fantastic views and lots of security — I always assume I'm cooking on camera.

I'm usually given an awful, windowless single room with Ikea furniture. Once I was in the garage, next to the air con room. The clients don't care about staff wellness. They want you to disappear.

> **"I had to cook for their dog. The wife never wore underwear and she liked to flash me**

As soon as we arrive they want lunch in an hour. I never see anything of the location or the beach. I don't get to sit by the pool. I go from the airport to the supermarket to the villa, start cooking, and I don't stop until I leave. My rate is £500 a day plus tips. It's hard work but I do love it — when I'm cooking I'm flying.

First things first: I give the kitchen a thorough clean. Housekeepers don't clean properly. I swab to make sure everything's sanitised, because I don't want to get sued for poisoning people.

Then I meet the guests, we sit down so I can hear their requirements. They always have dietary exclusions, especially the women (are you really coeliac, because I don't want to kill you?) who are on endlessly confounding and illogical diets. Anyone from southern California is the worst. One woman had 25 dietary exclusions, another didn't eat purple food. I have to take them seriously, but after they get drunk it always changes and the vegans want steaks.

I have to be at the market by 6am every morning to get everything fresh. I often invite guests to come with me — it's really important to show them the cost of things: a sea bass could be €500 in St Tropez and 12 white strawberries €20. One client had €80 of berries to himself every breakfast. I often bring caviar and foie gras with me. If I don't have enough I get it shipped in.

I'm in the kitchen from 7.30am until 11pm in case someone wants food. Breakfast is the worst — it could last three hours as different people wander in at different times wanting different things.

Ideally you want breakfast over by 11.30am because lunch is at 2.30pm — usually they've changed their mind from what they asked for the night before. One group told me they had lunch booked every day at Club 55 in St Tropez but every day they'd cancel it and want me to cook. Another client decided she wanted a party for 30 the next day. I cooked for 30 — no one turned up.

I spent one year working for a couple as a weekend/travel chef going between Oxfordshire and St Moritz. I had to cook for their dog, with a special request for aged parmesan and fillet steak to be served at the same time as their lunch. The wife never wore underwear and liked to flash me. Extraordinary.

Whatever they want, I make it happen. I cooked for one client for three months in St Tropez. He gave me €10,000 a week to feed two to four people and I'd usually spend most of it. Once he called me when he was boarding the helicopter in Cannes, eight minutes away (and unusual that he called me himself), to say "I know you've made the sea bass, but my guest wants steak". I ran to the local hotel and paid £500 for a whole fillet of beef, drove back 5km in the dark, trimmed it in five minutes and got it on the grill so he could hear the meat sizzling when he walked in.

I decorate everything really beautifully. I use gold leaf, fresh edible flowers, I weave baskets out of banana leaves. I always try to cook with local produce. I can make anything. In the early 2000s people wanted lobster and caviar but tastes have evolved. Yotam Ottolenghi has had a massive impact. Now they want spices, salads and grains, interesting fresh, vibrant, colourful food and anything impressive. I cook a lot of salt-crusted sea bass and whole fillets of beef.

Weight-loss medication has completely changed things too — portions are smaller and they're more protein-rich — but food is now a spectator sport. They photograph it, taste a tiny bit, smile, say it is delicious and leave it.

Some clients ask you to get coke. I won't, but I do have a silver platter and straw to serve it. Just in case. You have to be prepared for everything.

The chef has chosen to remain anonymous. As told to Katie Glass

LAURA LEWIS/CAMERA PRESS

‘I needed to know that I still had it’

The X Factor winner Alexandra Burke is playing Chaka Khan in a new musical. She talks to Blanca Schofield

“There has not been a moment, I think, that has topped it,” says Alexandra Burke, pointing at a picture of her and Beyoncé performing *Listen* in the 2008 final of *The X Factor*, which Burke won. “*That*,” she says, tapping Beyoncé’s face, “is very hard to top.”

She’s not wrong: the euphorically superb rendition of the *Dreamgirls* belter must be in the top five TV moments of the Noughties. The idea that Beyoncé — or any A-lister, for that matter — would agree to appear on a programme like *The X Factor* now is laughable. But back then it was *the* show. More than 14 million people watched the final.

Burke and I are in the backstage corridor of the Troubadour Wembley Park Theatre in London, where *The X Factor* was filmed, hence the picture of her and Beyoncé hanging on the wall. Here, serendipitously, Burke, 37, is starring in *I’m Every Woman: The Chaka Khan Musical*. In the 17 years since the release of her chart-topping debut album, *Overcome* — featuring her cover of *Hallelujah* (which scored the Christmas No 1) and the hit *Bad Boys* — she has moved into stage and screen work, receiving praise for roles in *The Bodyguard*, *Chicago*, *Sister Act* and more, as well as coming second in the 2017 series of *Strictly Come Dancing*. “I do have a lot of energy,” she says, snacking on pre-show dates in her dressing room.

Alongside acting, she is recording music again and trying to convince her manager to find a way for her to release an EP soon, yelping at him in the next room to tell me a date for the drop. “I want to give my fans something,” she cries. “They’re getting pissed off with me now.” She dipped her toe back into pop in May with a performance to 40,000 fans at the Mighty Hoopla festival in London. “I needed to know I still had it,” she says. “You do lose a part of yourself at times when you become a mum.” She has two toddlers with her partner, the footballer Darren Randolph, whom she met on the dating app Raya.

There is much to discuss. But first: Beyoncé. I ask her how often she watches the video of them together. “Not often enough, darling, because I don’t want to cry my whole life. I still cry to this day because I still can’t believe I had that opportunity. It’s wild, isn’t it?” She cried on stage too and when she met Beyoncé before their rehearsal. She wasn’t the only one. “Her mum starts crying, her stylist starts crying, everyone in the room starts crying.” And Beyoncé? “She’s crying.”

Beyoncé initially told Burke she wanted them to sing her new single *If I Were a Boy*. But Burke didn’t know the lyrics. So Beyoncé agreed to *Listen*, which they only ran through once to make sure Burke could save her voice, with the pop star saying to her: “I didn’t fly all this way to sing with someone who’s going to lose tonight. So you have to win.”

They stayed in touch. Beyoncé sent her an email afterwards saying “the show had helped her as much as it helped me”, Burke says. She then went to see Burke in the studio in Los Angeles and listened to some of her new solo music, with a glass of white wine. If Beyoncé is on tour in the UK, Burke tries to go and see her backstage. “Every time I see her, she’s always pleasant and a very generous soul.”

Reality TV has been under a lot of scrutiny for the care producers put into the welfare of contestants. Did Burke feel she had enough support? “I had my mum. I had a lot of support from the woman that was already in the industry that warned me about things that would happen,” she says of her mother, Melissa Bell, the singer from Soul II Soul. She found it harder after she was moved on from Syco Music, Simon Cowell’s record label, before her second album, *Heartbreak on Hold*. “I remember crying in the car... it’s a conveyor belt at the end of the day isn’t it? It’s business.”

How does she feel being back in the place where her career started, to star in the musical? “I’ve struggled a lot,” Burke says. “It brought back a lot of memories of my mum being here. Walking up and down that corridor with my family,” she says. Her mother died in 2017 from kidney failure brought on by diabetes, just before Burke appeared on *Strictly*. “I still struggle with it. It’s really hard for me as a woman, as a mother, not to have that guidance... Sorry,” Burke whispers as she starts to cry. “Do you still have your mum? Cherish her.”

Beyoncé and Burke in the 2008 final of The X Factor

As a child growing up in north London, Burke aspired to be a singer and a mother, like Bell. “I’ve got the two things I dreamt of as a child,” she says. “And I think she’d be really proud, but I struggle that she’s not here because she should be here. She was only 53, so to me I feel robbed of time with her. But I know she’s always with me.” Even the fact she is playing Khan on stage feels symbolic. For her first *X Factor* audition when she was 15, Burke sang Khan’s music with her mother. Then her mother came to see her perform for Khan in New York in 2012. “I feel like she’s orchestrated this.”

I’m Every Woman is a new musical with a book by Nia T Hill, who has worked on other prominent productions including *Dreamgirls* and has been Khan’s creative director since 2013. Through hits such as *Ain’t Nobody* and *Higher Love*, the show tells the story of Khan’s life. It’s a gruelling tale. The “Queen of Funk” got married for the first time aged 17 and suffered with addiction, including drug abuse and alcoholism. Burke felt the sadness of it all deeply when she started working on it. “I’m having to bring up things from my past. I’m having to bring up things that I know friends have gone through with drugs. I’m having to really relive things that I don’t want to think about,” she says.

Alexandra Burke as Chaka Khan in I’m Every Woman

Burke wishes she could talk to her mother about juggling family life with work. “You’re so torn with wanting to be with your kids and then you’ve got to go off to work. Like today I had a massive tantrum from my eldest when I was leaving,” she says. “When I was growing up, mum was always on tour... She had to provide. And that’s my biggest lesson: nothing comes for free. You’ve got to work for what you want in life.”

Burke celebrates her successes unashamedly. When she played Roxie in *Chicago* in the West End, she sent a ticket to her ex-boyfriend, who said “get off your high horse” when she told him she wanted the part. But her experience in the theatre, though financially and creatively fulfilling, has been disappointing in one important aspect.

“I’ve done seven lead roles, 12 years in the industry and *never* been recognised for my talent in theatre,” she says. “In the past eight years [they] haven’t even invited me back to the Oliviers [she last attended in 2018].” Why does she think that is? “I don’t know.”

She’s refreshingly open about this, as she has been about the sexism and racism she endured after *The X Factor*, revealing that she was told to bleach her skin and avoid afro and braid hairstyles. When she was on *Strictly* she had someone come up to her in the supermarket, saying they’d heard she was a “bitch”. “And I remember crying to that person going: ‘I’m not. I’m actually an all right person. I just love humans.’ It’s taken me years to sadly come away from the narrative that’s been painted of me,” she says. “I was told to be quiet. I was told to not react... I’ve slowly become a bit more confident.”

Then it’s time for her to do her vocal warm-ups before going on stage. And for me to watch the video of her with Beyoncé — for the 50th time.

***I’m Every Woman: The Chaka Khan Musical* is at Troubadour Wembley Park Theatre, London, to Sep 27**

times2

Your weekday brain boost

More puzzles
Pages 14-16

Every day, Monday to Thursday, a page of extra puzzles to give your brain an extended workout

Samurai medium

Fill each grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Where the puzzles overlap, the rows and columns do not go beyond their usual length.

	9			5	1	8		
			1	2	5	4		6
1	4			8				2
		9		5	8	2	9	
	2		8		1		5	
5			6			2		
4				9				
7		8	3	4	1			
9	5	1				4		

	6	9	4	1	3	2		
						9	6	3
	3				7	6	4	
5			1	3		7		9
3		7	7		5			5
				4	2			
			2					
			2				7	
			3	7	1	8	6	

				4				
			8					
			3	9				
			3			2	9	
		7	5			3		

	5	1	8	6	4			7
						6		
	8				5			
9			6	8		5		3
5		6		2	3			4
	2	5	7			4		
7		4						
		3	4	5	6	2	7	

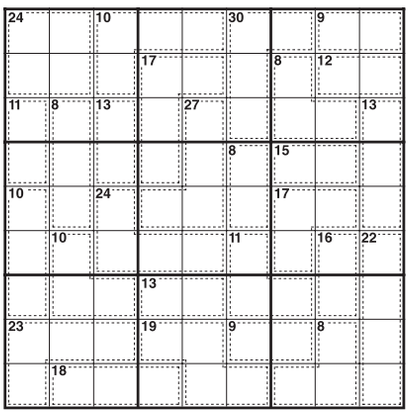
				4	5	8		
			7	6		6	9	
			2	5	8	7		6
				1				9
		3		6	2			7
		7	3		1		6	
		2		4	9	1		
			6			3		
			7		5	4	7	4
			4	3	8	1	4	6

Sudoku fiendish

				7		6		
		8	9		6			
2		6						9
	8			9			7	
	5		4		7			3
4	3		6	1			2	
						1	6	
			7	8	1			
			3			7		

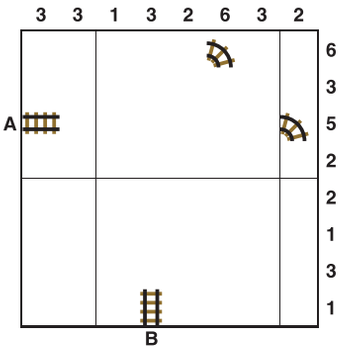
Killer tricky

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.



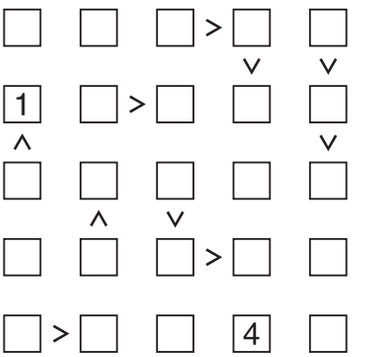
Train Tracks

Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

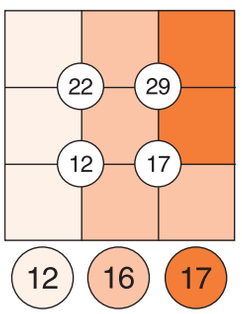


Futoshiki

Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.



Sakuro

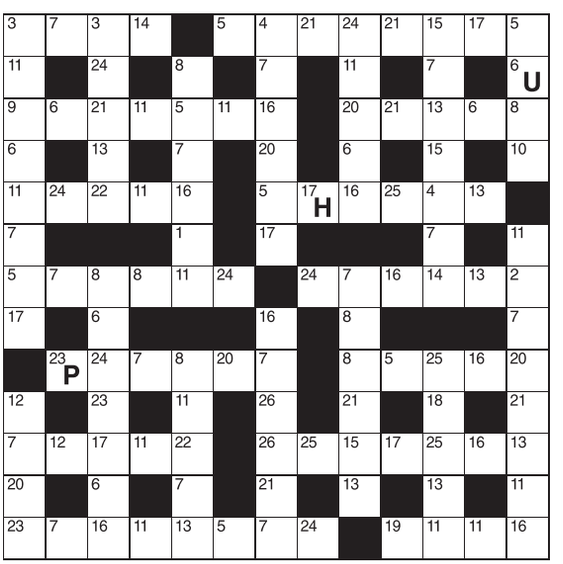


Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

Play Mini Sudoku every day Monday-Sunday online at thetimes.com and on Live app

Codeword

Every letter in the crossword-style grid, right, is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded.



A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
					U							
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
			H						P			

Mini Sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x2 box contains the digits 1 to 6

Solutions in tomorrow's Times2

		1	3		
5			2		
			5	1	3
	5				2
2		5			
	6			2	

Yesterday's solutions

SAMURAI

8	1	7	5	3	2	9	6	4		5	6	4	3	9	7	1	8	2	
6	9	2	1	4	8	3	7	5		8	7	9	1	2	6	5	3	4	
4	3	5	7	6	9	1	2	8		2	1	3	4	8	5	7	9	6	
2	6	3	9	7	4	5	8	1		3	5	6	8	7	2	4	1	9	
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			7	2	3	9	5	6	4	8	1								
			1	4	8	7	2	3	9	5	6								
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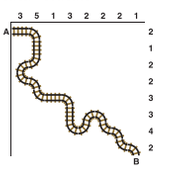
8	7	2	6	3	4	5	9	1	2	3	7	8	6	4	1	7	3	9	2	5
5	1	7	4	2	9	6	3	8				1	8	6	3	9	7	5	4	2
6	2	8	3	5	1	7	4	9				9	4	2	8	6	5	3	7	1
4	3	9	8	7	6	1	5	2				7	5	3	4	2	1	8	6	9
7	6	5	1	4	8	9	2	3				6	3	5	2	1	8	7	9	4
2	4	1	7	9	3	8	6	5				2	7	8	5	4	9	6	1	3
9	8	3	2	6	5	4	1	7				4	9	1	7	3	6	2	5	8

SAKURO

MINI SUDOKU

6	3	2	4	1	5
5	4	1	3	6	2
4	1	6	2	5	3
2	5	3	6	4	1
3	6	5	1	2	4
1	2	4	5	3	6

TRAIN TRACKS



FUTOSHIKI

2	4	1	3	5
5	2	< 4	1	3
1	5	3	4	2
4	3	< 5	2	1
3	1	< 2	5	> 4

SUDOKU

9	1	2	4	6	8	7	3	5
6	5	7	3	1	2	4	8	9
4	8	3	5	9	7	2	6	1
2	4	1	8	7	3	5	9	6
7	6	9	1	4	5	8	2	3
5	3	8	9	2	6	1	4	7
8	7	4	6	5	9	3	1	2
3	9	5	2	8	1	6	7	4
1	2	6	7	3	4	9	5	8

KILLER

1	6	5	3	8	9	4	7	2
4	9	8	7	1	2	5	6	3
3	2	7	4	5	6	9	8	1
5	7	9	2	6	8	3	1	4
8	3	1	9	4	7	6	2	5
2	4	6	5	3	1	8	9	7
9	1	4	8	7	5	2	3	6
6	8	3	1	2	4	7	5	9
7	5	2	6	9	3	1	4	8

CODEWORD

S	K	I	R	M	I	S	H	C	A	L	M		
E	N	U	E	Q	L	A							
I	D	E	A	L	R	A	U	C	O	U	S		
Z	X	L	V	A	N	T							
E	X	A	M	E	R	I	N	G	U	E			
C	S	D	L	R									
C	I	T	R	U	S	M	E	L	O	D	Y		
R	A	C	D	R									
O	B	L	I	V	I	O	N	A	G	E	D		
W	I	E	M	S	A	R							
D	E	V	E	L	O	P	H	E	N	N	A		
E	I	Y	E	O	Z	N							
D	O	D	O	F	L	A	P	J	A	C	K		

I can't spot a star even without the disguises

Carol Midgley TV review

Celebrity Hunted
Channel 4
★★★☆☆

Celebrity Hunted is back but I daresay it was the audience who had the biggest challenge... in working out who some of these "celebrities" were. Chris Taylor and Toby Aromolaran? Of course you don't know them — they are "content creators" who were on *Love Island*. You might have had better luck with Jen Brister and Laura Smyth (comedians) and Scarlette and Stuart Douglas (sibling property show presenters). But I think these days reality TV is rather stretching the definition of celebrity like perished knicker elastic.

Most people, to be fair, would probably have recognised Amy Dowden (*Strictly Come Dancing* professional) and JJ Chalmers, a former Royal Marine who was injured in a bomb blast in Afghanistan and is now a TV presenter and Invictus Games medallist. And we did have the likeable Brian Conley, entering the challenge with his daughter Lucy, though one of the first things he said was that "only old people know who I am" (possibly true) along with "I think we're going to be crap".

As veteran *Hunted* viewers know contestants must go on the run, in this case for 14 days, in Great Britain while avoiding a team of hunters comprising former police officers and intelligence personnel who can use all the powers of the state such as ANPR, CCTV, phone call tracing and whatnot. If you use a bank card they immediately know where you are.

And, my, do the hunters love their roles, hamming it up to the rafters. I don't know why they chose these careers, because they clearly want to be actors in a spoof of *The Sweeney*. "If they land — boom — they're in the bag and we're back for last orders. I'll get the first round in," said the HQ chief Ray. Of the *Love Island* duo the hunters said: "They clearly think they're the dog's bollocks."

The big flaw in *Hunted* is always the same. You are expected to believe the "prey" are pulling on disguises, trying to blend in with the crowds, hiding behind a hedge or whatever when we all know every duo has a camera crew in tow, so you'd be able to spot them from a country mile off.

Brian and Lucy Conley attempt to evade the hunters

The celebrity version feels particularly staged because everyone feels they have to be entertaining and other celebrities are roped in. Conley had his friend Joe Pasquale primed to help by giving them a lift but the hunters quickly got on to their communications, turned up where the Conleys were staying — and still managed to lose them. Chalmers and his co-prey dressed up as Chelsea pensioners to evade capture, and it worked. It's almost as if the producers just want to keep them in.

But you can't really be negative about this show because it's all designed to raise funds for cancer research. There was a story at the end about Matthew, who has brain cancer, and it was heartbreaking.

So I can't be too cynical about the daftness, especially when the Conleys had to lock themselves in a train's lavatory — no one deserves that. It's why I have developed a bladder of steel so I never have to enter them.

I have read that in a future episode Laura and Jen get very drunk and have suggested a spin-off show where contestants just get pie-eyed. I think I'd rather watch that.

Radio choice

File on 4 Investigates
Radio 4, 8pm

In *A Romanian Ransom*, Paul Kenyon, *above*, tells the story of antisemitism in the country, which continued well after the Second World War, when under the communist Ceausescu regime Jews were restricted from leaving Romania. Kenyon follows the stories of Andrea Bernard and Radu Horaud, who were brought up hiding their Jewish heritage, whose parents defected to the West and who were eventually reunited with them. How? By a Hertfordshire farmer, Henry Jakober, who exchanged pigs, cattle and farm equipment for visas for those Jews who wanted to leave Romania.
Clair Woodward

Times Radio
Digital, web, smart speaker, app
5.00am Tom Nunan with Early Breakfast **6.00** Kate McCann and Stig Abell with Breakfast **10.00** Ed Vaizey **1.00pm** Sebastian Payne **2.00** Jane Garvey and Fi Glover **4.00** John Pienaar with Drive **7.00** The Evening Edition with Kait Borsay **10.00** Carole Walker **1.00am** The Best of Times Radio

Radio 2
FM: 88-90.2 MHz
6.30am The Sara Cox Breakfast Show **9.30** Vernon Kay **12.00** Jeremy Vine **2.00pm** DJ Spoony **4.00** Joel Dommett **7.00** Jo Whiley **9.00** The Jazz Show with Jamie Cullum **10.00** The Good Groove with Melvin Odoom **12.00** Connor Phillips **3.00am** Sounds of the 90s (r) **4.00** Owain Wyn Evans

Radio 3
FM: 90.2-92.4 MHz
6.30am Breakfast
9.30 Essential Classics
1.00pm Classical Live
Elizabeth Alker introduces highlights from the Proms. BBC Proms: Korngold (Violin Concerto in D, Op 35). Ryedale Festival: Strauss (Sextet from "*Capriccio*"). International Sacred Music Festival, Fribourg: Galuppi (*Dixit Dominus*). BBC Proms: Prokofiev (Symphony No 5 in B flat, Op 100). Ryedale Festival: Schubert (Piano Sonata in A, D. 664) and Ryedale Festival: Mendelssohn (String Octet in E flat, Op 20)
4.00 Composer of the Week: Mozart (1756-1791)
Kate Molleson explores Mozart's relationship with his sister Nannerl, from their close bond in childhood to estrangement
5.00 In Tune
With Tom Fetherstonhaugh
7.00 Live BBC Proms 2026
The BBC National Orchestra of Wales, conductor Elena Schwarz and Alina Ibragimova perform. Presented by Alexandra Humphreys, live from the Royal Albert Hall, London. BA Zimmermann (*Fairy-Tale* Suite); Mendelssohn (Violin Concerto in E minor); and Dvořák (Symphony No 7 in D minor)
10.00 Night Tracks
11.30 'Round Midnight
A Track Premiere from Fred Thomas and Heidi Heidelberg
12.30am Through the Night (r)

Radio 4
FM: 92.4-94.6 MHz
5.00am News Summary
5.04 Britain's Robot Army (r)
5.34 Shipping Forecast
5.43 Prayer for the Day
5.45 Farming Today
6.00 Today
9.00 Invisible Hands
The story of the man who started the Cold War with a telegram (2/6)
9.30 Inside Health
Weekly quest to demystify health issues with James Gallagher (5/6)
10.00 Woman's Hour
Kylie Pentelow presents
11.00 Screenshot
Film and television's enduring fascination with UFOs and extraterrestrial life (5/6) (r)
11.45 Tony Hawks Is Giving Nothing Away
A man who gave away £100,000 of his inheritance (2/5) (r)
12.04pm Call You and Yours
1.00 The World at One
1.45 The Bare Necessities
Visiting a forager and herbalist who grows wild plants that provide food and medicine (2/5)
2.00 The Archers (r)
2.15 Drama: Sunbird
By Christopher William Hill
3.00 Lady on Trial
with Lucy Worsley
An opera singer who challenged the Victorian lunacy laws (8/10)
3.30 Heart and Soul
Remembering how Catholicism helped overthrow a dictator in the Philippines (4/10) (r)
4.00 The Writing Life of Sylvia Plath
How Plath's experience of mental illness and depression informed her work. Last in the series
4.30 What's Up Docs?
Exploring hydration
5.00 PM
6.00 Six O'Clock News
6.30 Meet David Sedaris
The humorist reads his essay *Sweet Land of Liberty* (6/6) (r)
7.00 The Archers
Bert comes a cropper
7.15 Front Row
Arts programme
8.00 Choice A Romanian Ransom
A secret Cold War trade of animals in exchange for Jewish lives
8.40 In Touch
News for people who are blind or partially sighted
9.00 Crossing Continents
Report on how Gaza is developing as an unlikely tech hub (1/9)
9.30 Scam Secrets
With Shari Vahl (1/8) (r)
10.00 The World Tonight
10.45 Book at Bedtime: The Vicar of Wakefield
By Oliver Goldsmith (2/10)
11.00 Wild Inside
The great grey owl (2/4) (r)
11.30 Hollywood and the Adland Five
How Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* helped transform the look of cinema (2/4) (r)
12.00 News and Weather
12.30am Tony Hawks Is Giving Nothing Away (2/5) (r)
12.48 Shipping Forecast
1.00 As BBC World Service

Radio 4 Extra
Digital only
8.30am Following Pappano **8.45** Small Island **9.00** Meet David Sedaris **9.30** Behind the Taverna **9.45** Daily Service **10.00** Free Thinking **10.45** The Essay: The Little Secrets of Great Works **11.00** The Waiting Game **11.30** Who Killed Aldrich Kemp? **12.00** Yes Minister **12.30pm** The Last Goon Show of All **1.30** Following Pappano **1.45** Small Island **2.00** Hoax! **2.30** The Brothers **3.00** A Wizard of Earthsea **4.00** Free Thinking **4.45** The Essay: The Little Secrets of Great Works **5.00** The Waiting Game **5.30** Who Killed Aldrich Kemp? **6.00** Yes Minister **6.30** The Last Goon Show of All **7.30** Following Pappano **7.45** Small Island **8.00** Hoax! **8.30** The Brothers **9.00** A Wizard of Earthsea **10.00** Comedy Club: Meet David Sedaris **10.30** And the Winner Is **11.00** All the World's a Globe **11.15** Foley and McColl: Interview **11.30** Chain Reaction

Radio 5 Live
MW: 693, 909
5.00am Wake Up to Money **6.00** Breakfast **9.00** Nicky Campbell **11.00** Marianna Spring **2.00pm** Matt Chorley **4.00** Drive **7.00** Sport **9.00** Athletics **10.00** Johnny l'Anson **1.00am** Dotun Adebayo

talkSPORT
MW: 1053, 1089 kHz
5.00am Early Sports Breakfast **6.00** Breakfast with Jeff Stelling **10.00** Alex Crook & Darragh MacAnthony **1.00pm** Hawksbee and Jacobs **4.00** talkSPORT Drive **7.00** The Transfer Insiders **10.00** The Sports Bar **1.00am** Extra Time

Talk
Digital only
6.00am Ian Collins **10.00** Julia Hartley Brewer **1.00pm** Mark Dolan **4.00** Kevin O'Sullivan **7.00** Peter Cardwell **10.00** Petrie Hosken **1.00am** Paul Ross

6 Music
Digital only
6.00am Chris Hawkins **7.00** Nick Grimshaw **10.00** Lauren Laverne **1.00pm** Craig Charles **4.00** Emily Pilbeam **7.00** New Music Fix Daily **9.00** Riley & Coe **11.00** 6 Music Artist in Residence: Ezra Collective **12.00** 6 Music's Indie Forever **1.00am** From Mento to Lovers' Rock **3.00** 6 Music Live Hour **4.00** The 6 Music Playlist

Virgin Radio
Digital only
6.30am Steve Denyer on The Chris Evans Breakfast Show with Moneybox **10.00** Emma B **2.00pm** Ben Jones **6.00** Geoff Lloyd **10.00** Jen Thomas **2.00am** Stu Elmore

Classic FM
FM: 100-102 MHz
6.30am Breakfast with Dan Walker **9.00** The Hall of Fame Hour with Dan Walker **10.00** Aled Jones **1.00pm** Anne-Marie Minhall **4.00** Margherita Taylor **7.00** Relaxing Evenings with Zeb Soanes **9.00** Classic FM's Composer Carousel With Zeb Soanes **10.00** Calm Classics **1.00am** Bill Overton **4.00** Early Breakfast

television

PICKS OF THE DAY

The Victorians with Rob Rinder and Ruth Goodman
5, 9pm

Rob Rinder and Ruth Goodman return with another of their *Rich Lives, Poor Lives* investigative series, in this episode focusing on the Victorian age. As ever, his interest is in the wealthy and hers the huddled masses, the presenting pair play-acting happily as irretrievable snob and beaten-down worker. Tonight, the age of the railways, which would transform the British countryside, revolutionise trade and create opportunities for ordinary people. Goodman points out that the fastest most people would have travelled was at their own running pace, so the mere idea of stepping into the third-class open carriages (effectively cattle crates, to Rinder's disgust) was breathtaking. First, though, railway lines would have to be cut through the land. Men of vision laid the plans, but for the labourers who hacked at the land it was dirty, dangerous work.
Helen Stewart

Rob Rinder (5, 9pm)

The Salisbury Poisonings: A Spy Next Door
Sky Documentaries/Now, 9pm

If Channel 4's *The Salisbury Poisonings* hasn't answered all your questions about the 2018 Novichok attack on Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia, then this might. Among those interviewed are the former prime minister Theresa May; the former home secretary Amber Rudd; and Charlie Rowley, the partner of Dawn Sturgess, the woman killed by inadvertent exposure to the nerve agent.
Victoria Segal

Cold Case Forensics
ITV1, 9pm

The world-renowned former senior Home Office forensic scientist Dr Angela Gallop and her team investigate the sudden death of a British solicitor while on a romantic

BBC1

6.00am Breakfast
9.30 Animal Park (r) (AD)
10.15 Trace, Track, Get My Car Back (r)
10.45 Expert Witness (r)
11.15 Homes Under the Hammer
12.15pm Bargain Hunt (r) (AD)
1.00 BBC News at One; Weather
1.35 BBC Regional News; Weather
1.45 BBC News at One; Weather
2.00 Money for Nothing. Saving a massage bed and a dining set from the skip
2.45 Escape to the Country. Nicki Chapman seeks a Pembrokeshire property (r)
3.45 The Bidding Room. Featuring a teapot, toy tools, barrels and a model caravan (r)
4.30 The Answer Run. Jason Manford hosts the fast-paced quiz show with questions featuring a choice between *The Chronicles of Narnia* or *Harry Potter*, James Corden or Steve Coogan and LA or New York
5.15 Pointless. Quiz show (r)
6.00 BBC News at Six; Weather
6.30 BBC Regional News; Weather

7.00 The One Show Presented by Alex Jones and Lauren Laverne

7.30 EastEnders Ravi pushes Priya for answers about her mystery man. Meanwhile, Lauren tries to deflect Peter's questions (AD)

8.00 The Great British Sewing Bee The sewers celebrate Mexican fashion, demonstrating their skills with a folkloric top, structural garments made from tablecloths and made-to-measure outfits inspired by Mexican festivals (4/10) (AD)

9.00 Murder 24/7 The first of a two-part investigation into the 2025 murder of 54-year-old Hereford man Jamie Gawler, found in his flat having being beaten to death. With no witnesses, the investigating team began to piece together the victim's final days. Continues tomorrow (5/8) (AD)

10.00 BBC News at Ten

10.30 BBC Regional News and Weather

10.40 FILM: Robin Hood (12, 2010) ★ An archer fighting in Richard the Lionheart's crusading army returns home to England and assumes the identity of a nobleman killed in battle. His new-found status draws him into a dangerous conflict with members of the newly crowned King John's court, and a traitorous knight plots to aid the French in conquering England. Ridley Scott's medieval adventure with Russell Crowe and Cate Blanchett. *See film choice* (AD)

12.55am-6.00 BBC News

BBC2

6.30am Bargain Hunt (r)
7.15 The Bidding Room. The dealers are starstruck by a cinematic collection (r)
8.00 Sign Zone: The Great British Sewing Bee. Contestants recycle T-shirts (r) (AD, SL)
9.00 BBC News
1.00pm Richard Osman's House of Games. Sean Fletcher, Louise Minchin, Chris Washington and Kimberly Wyatt take part (r)
1.30 The Finish Line. Quiz show hosted by Roman Kemp and Sarah Greene (r)
2.15 Do You Know Your Place? The quiz heads to Cardiff. Vernon Kay hosts (r)
2.45 Live Cricket — The Hundred: Sunrisers Leeds Women v London Spirit Women (Start-time **3.00**). Coverage of the match at Headingley. The Sunrisers, known previously as Northern Superchargers, claimed an eight-wicket victory when these teams met at Lord's in last season's competition, with Phoebe Litchfield's 55 not out from 38 balls proving to be decisive and earning her the player of the match award

6.00 Live Cricket — The Hundred: Sunrisers Leeds Men v London Spirit Men (Start-time **6.30**). Coverage of the match at Headingley. Zak Crawley top-scored for the then-known Northern Superchargers with 55 not out from 38 balls, as he inspired his team to an eight-wicket win over today's opponents at Lord's in last season's competition. The Leeds-based outfit went on to reach the Eliminator, but the contest was rained off, with Trent Rockets advancing at their expense due to having a better position in the round-robin stage

9.30 The Vampire Lestat: Interview with the Vampire An illicit old ally of Lestat's boards the dazed band's tour bus, while some familiar faces await at their next stop (2/7) (AD)

10.15 It Happened to Me: I Was Jailed in Japan for Ketamine A British woman's ketamine addiction led to a stint in a Japanese prison (2/6)

10.30 Newsnight Headline analysis presented by Victoria Derbyshire

11.05 FILM: The Last Bus (12, 2021) A pensioner travels from John O'Groats to Land's End using his free bus pass, becoming a social media celebrity along the way. Drama with Timothy Spall and Phyllis Logan

12.30am-1.30 Sign Zone: Uncanny Danny Robins presents an adaptation of the Radio 4 series, featuring real-life accounts of supernatural encounters, expert analysis, and investigations (r) (AD, SL)

ITV1

6.00am Good Morning Britain
10.00 This Morning
1.30pm ITV News; Weather
2.00 Dickinson's Real Deal. David Dickinson and his team of experts are in Crewe, where Fay Rutter assesses some timepieces on her table and Stewart Hofgartner spies a gem in a boy's toy collection (r) (AD)
3.00 Deal or No Deal. Stephen Mulhern hosts as a contestant tries to open the 22 red boxes in the right order, taking on the infamous Banker for the chance to win a life-changing cash prize (r) (AD)
4.00 Tipping Point. Ben Shephard hosts the arcade-themed quiz in which contestants drop tokens down a choice of four chutes in the hope of winning a £10,000 jackpot (r)
5.00 The Chase. Bradley Walsh presents as contestants from Welwyn Garden City, Northampton, Liverpool and East Yorkshire work take on one of the Chasers (r)
6.00 Regional News; Weather
6.30 ITV News; Weather

7.30 Inside the Langham: Britain's First Grand Hotel The CEO arrives to inspect one of the hotel's most ambitious renovations (3/6) (AD)

8.00 Emmerdale Cain is emotional as he decides now is the time, and Nicola makes a worrying discovery (AD)

8.30 Coronation Street Dylan ends up unconscious after a confrontation, and Ross changes his story (AD)

9.00 Cold Case Forensics: A Death on the Nile ★ Forensic scientist Dr Angela Gallop and her team investigate the mysterious, sudden death of a British solicitor while on a romantic holiday in Egypt. Nicola Walker narrates. *See picks of the day* (2/3) (AD)

10.00 ITV News at Ten; Weather; followed by Regional News

10.45 FILM: Bad Boys II (15, 2003) Two mismatched undercover cops set out to halt an underground gang war and bring down a drug lord attempting to flood the market with a deadly form of Ecstasy. However, a romantic interlude threatens to drive the investigation off course. Comedy thriller sequel starring Will Smith, Martin Lawrence and Gabrielle Union

1.10am Shop on TV 3.00 The Summit. After the group endure a gruelling eight-hour uphill hike weighed down by prize money, the Mountain's Keeper presents them with a dilemma (r) (AD, SL) **3.50** Unwind with ITV **5.05-6.00** Long Lost Family: Born Without Trace. Helping more foundlings (r) (AD, SL)

Channel 4

6.30am The King of Queens (r) (AD)
7.45 Everybody Loves Raymond (r) (AD)
9.10 Frasier (r) (AD)
11.10 Ramsay's Kitchen Nightmares USA. Gordon visits The Verdict in New Orleans (r)
12.05pm Channel 4 News Summary
12.10 Find It, Fix It, Flog It. A collection of classic cars and motorbikes (r) (AD)
1.10 The Great House Giveaway. A house in the Welsh Valleys at auction (r)
2.10 Countdown. With Ade Adepitan
3.00 A Place in the Sun. Best friends search for a holiday home in Andalucia, Spain (r)
4.00 Saving Country Houses with Penelope Keith. In the Cotswolds, a young couple recently inherited Chavenage House and have bold plans to turn the estate into a glamping and sauna destination (r) (AD)
5.00 Château DIY. A DIY novice tries to rebuild a bridge sitting over a stream (r) (AD)
6.00 American Pickers. Mike Wolfe and Frank Fritz discover a fleet of amazing concept cars, some very unique (r) (AD)

7.00 Channel 4 News

8.00 Hotel Chocolat Unwrapped A chocolatier dreams up limited edition drinking chocolate flavours, and founder Angus pulls out all the stops during the countdown to the opening of the Chicago store (AD)

9.00 Celebrity Hunted Two of the competitors drop in on a celebrity colleague, another pair make a bold move by going on live television and two more alert the hunters after cracking jokes in Brighton (AD)

10.00 Gogglebox The armchair critics share their views of *The Celebrity Traitors*, *Game of Wool: Britain's Best Knitter*, *Trigger Point*, *Hunted*, *Squid Game: The Challenge* and *Hamza's Hidden Wild Isles* (r) (AD)

11.05 Secret Lives of Gypsy Wives The family host bonfire night for the estate in memory of their dad Sid. Trewley gets a lesson in tough love from her mum (r) (AD)

12.05am Naked Attraction (r) (AD) **1.05** Ramsay's Hotel Hell. In Idaho (r) (AD, SL) **1.55 FILM: Breakthrough (12, 2019)** Fact-based drama starring Chrissy Metz (SL) **3.50** Couples Come Dine with Me (r) (SL) **4.45** The Piano (r) (AD, SL) **5.40** Find It, Fix It, Flog It (r) **5.50-6.30** Countdown (r)

5

6.00am Milkshake!
9.15 Jeremy Vine
11.30 Storm & Alexis
12.45pm 5 News at Lunchtime
12.50 Matt Allwright
2.15 FILM: A Murder in Venice (PG, TVM, 2023) When her new roommate goes missing in Italy, an art student teams up with her aunt to save her friend. Thriller starring Sophie Hopkins and Charlotte Rothwell
4.00 Castle. Beckett and her team investigate the murder of a television actress, while Castle is hired by the show's star to follow the case from a different angle. Nathan Fillion stars (r)
4.55 Love Nature. Cameras focus on Eryri National Park in North Wales (r)
5.00 5 News with Dan Walker
6.00 Majorca: A Year in the Sun. Cameras focus on Majorca as a major hub for superyachts, and also a former chef who runs a luxury catering company (r)
6.55 5 News Update

7.00 The Yorkshire Vet: At Home with the Greens Jean gets to see her farm from above when Peter Wright takes her on a helicopter ride of a lifetime, while the Greens receive a visit from an estate agent (2/4) (r)

7.55 5 News Update

8.00 Inside Longleat There are unexpected visitors in Longleat garden, the cameras are primed to investigate which mammal has made more progress in the waterways in 12 months than humans have in 30

9.00 The Victorians with Rob Rinder and Ruth Goodman ★ Rob Rinder and Ruth Goodman discover how some of history's most famous events were experienced by the rich and by the poor. They start by exploring the 1840s Victorian era, when railway mania swept Britain. Rob follows the wealthy Victorians who poured their money into the railway boom, while Ruth investigates those who worked on the railways. *See picks of the day*

10.30 Manhunt: Search for the Cop Killer The 1982 police manhunt to find Barry Prudom, who was the most wanted man in Britain for 18 days after he shot and killed two police officers on a terrifying spree of violence. Featuring archive footage and reconstruction, this programme retraces the events that unfolded and Prudom's eventual demise (r)

12.05am The Cannibal Next Door The story of Armin Meiwes (r) **1.00** Cruise TV with LoveitBookit (r) **2.00** GPs: Behind Closed Doors (r) **2.50** Castle (r) **3.40** Friends (r) **4.30** The Highland Vet (r) (SL) **5.25** Entertainment News on 5 **5.35** Milo (r) (SL) **5.45-6.00** The Adventures of Paddington (r) (SL)

television

holiday in Egypt. The *Cold Case Forensics* true-crime documentary strand has been running since 2022, and in this latest episode Gallop seeks to unlock the secrets of the case to prove that Cheryl Lewis, from north Wales, was murdered at the Winter Palace Hotel on the banks of the River Nile in Luxor in October 1998. The episode is titled *A Death on the Nile* — Agatha Christie was a frequent visitor to the luxury hotel, which was a source of inspiration for her 1937 novel. **HS**

Joe & David's Magical Sitcom Tour
U&Gold, 9pm

This show sounds like it should simply be a frivolous lark: just two comedians — Joe Wilkinson and his writing partner David Earl — visiting sites associated with their favourite sitcoms. However, what transpires here is an oddly moving, eerily surreal trip through the world of *Porridge*, including an encounter with the show's writers, Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais. **VS**

STREAMING CHOICE

Doctor Odyssey
ITVX

Cancelled after just one season, Ryan Murphy's cruise ship medical drama was roundly lambasted by critics. Yet its small coterie of dedicated fans revelled in the lunacy and crafted a number of compelling theories about what was really happening on the high-camp high-seas. The main one was that Dr Max Bankman (Joshua Jackson) wasn't really the Odyssey cruise ship's onboard physician but was in a coma after contracting Covid-19. Ridiculous, maybe, but if you watch the show from that perspective it becomes a dark-edged fever-dream rather than a far-fetched TV soap. **Andrew Male**

FILM CHOICE

Robin Hood (12, 2010)
BBC1, 10.40pm

The director Ridley Scott reunites with Russell Crowe for a revisionist take on the Robin Hood myth that favours dark and convoluted plotting. Crowe is a brooding Robin Longstride, an archer in Richard the Lionheart's army. Richard is played by Danny Huston, so you know that he has to be a cad. He double-crosses Robin and his cohorts, who desert. But Robin's real foe is Godfrey (Mark Strong), a French agent working in the name of King John, but stirring unrest among the English populace. (140min) **Wendy Ide**

BBC4

7.00pm Great British Railway Journeys. Lincoln to York (AD) **7.30** Wainwright Walks. Exploring the work of Alfred Wainwright (AD) **8.00** To the Manor Born. Comedy **8.30** Keeping Up Appearances **9.00** She-Wolves: England's Early Queens. England's first all-female battle for succession (3/3) **10.00** Castles: Britain's Fortified History. How some castles were transformed into palaces (3/3) (AD) **11.00** Corridors of Power: Should America Police the World? How Obama handled the threat of chemical weapons (7/8) (AD) **12.00** Corridors of Power: Should America Police the World? (AD) **1.00am** She-Wolves: England's Early Queens. Last in the series **2.00** Castles: Britain's Fortified History (AD) **3.00am-3.30** Great British Railway Journeys (AD, SL)

Sky Arts

6.00am Classic FM's Rising Stars 2025 **7.00** Bagpipes: A Celebration (AD) **8.00** The Joy of Painting **9.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **10.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **11.00** Discovering (AD) **12.00** Wonderland: From JM Barrie to JRR Tolkien **1.00pm** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **2.00** The Alfred Hitchcock Hour (b/w) **3.00** The Seventies (AD) **4.00** Discovering (AD) **5.00** Portrait Artist of the Year 2021 (AD) **6.00** Tales of the Unexpected (AD) **7.00** Alfred Hitchcock Presents **8.00** The World in a Painting: Velazquez's Chili Pepper **9.15** Beyond the Brush (AD) **10.15** Wonderland: Gothic (AD) **11.15** The Movies (AD) **12.15am** I Am Steve McQueen **2.00** Voices of the Valleys. New series **3.00** World War II & Cinema (AD) **4.00am-5.00** Sky Arts Book Club

More4

8.55am Heir Hunters **10.00** Four in a Bed **12.40pm** Come Dine with Me (AD) **3.20** Four in a Bed **5.50** Car SOS. A 1992 VW Corrado in Huddersfield (AD) **6.50** Car SOS. A 1973 Dennis fire engine (AD) **7.55** Grand Designs. Kevin McCloud follows a couple as they transform a neglected half-acre site in Gloucestershire (1/8) (AD) **9.00** Oti and Richard's South African Odyssey. Oti and Richard meet a community of African penguins (AD) **10.00** 24 Hours in A&E. A 38-year-old tree surgeon is rushed in after falling 25ft (3/8) (AD) **11.05** 24 Hours in A&E. A 22-year-old is rushed in with stab wounds to his face and arm (4/8) (AD) **12.10am** 999: On the Front Line. Treating a man who has been stabbed **1.15** 24 Hours in A&E (AD) **3.25am-3.50** A Place in the Sun

Sunrisers Leeds captain Dani Gibson

Live Test Cricket: West Indies v Pakistan
TNT Sports 2, 2.30pm-11
The third day of the final Test in the series at Queen's Park Oval

Live The Hundred: Sunrisers Leeds Women v London Spirit Women
Sky Sports Cricket, Sky Sports Mix, 2.45pm-6, Sky Sports Main Event, 3pm-6
(Start-time **3.00**). At Headingley

Live Tennis
Sky Sports +, Sky Sports Tennis, 4pm-12midnight
Coverage from day three of the Canadian Open

Live The Hundred: Sunrisers Leeds Men v London Spirit Men
Sky Sports Main Event, Sky Sports Cricket, Sky Sports Mix, 6pm-9.30
(Start-time **6.30**). Coverage of the match at Headingley

Live MLB: Chicago Cubs v Los Angeles Dodgers
TNT Sports 1, 1am-4
(Start-time **1.00**). Coverage from Yankee Stadium

Talking Pictures

6.00am FILM: Murder at 3am (PG, 1953) (b/w) **7.10 FILM: The Proud Rebel (U, 1958)** (b/w) **9.15 FILM: Oliver Twist (PG, TVM, 1982) 11.15 FILM: Biggles: Adventure in Time (PG, 1986) 1.00pm** The Adventures of William Tell (b/w) **1.35 FILM: Appointment with Venus (U, 1951)** (b/w) **3.20** Anthony Perkins: The Actor Behind the Door **4.25 FILM: Chase a Crooked Shadow (U, 1957)** (b/w) **6.10** What's on TPTV with Noel **6.25** Whiplash (b/w) **6.55** The Man from UNCLE **7.55** Buccaneer **9.00 FILM: Accident (PG, 1967)** Drama starring Dirk Bogarde **11.05** Fortean TV **11.40 FILM: Body Double (18, 1984)** Thriller with Melanie Griffith **1.55am FILM: The Night of the Shooting Stars (15, 1982) 4.00am-5.00** Target: The Corruptors

Film4

11.00am Robot Dreams (PG, 2023) Animated adventure with the voice of Ivan Labanda **1.05pm Drums Along the Mohawk (PG, 1939)** Drama with Henry Fonda **3.10 The Mark of Zorro (PG, TVM, 1974)** Adventure starring Frank Langella (AD) **4.45 Rat Race (12, 2001)** Comedy with Rowan Atkinson (AD) **6.55 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutant Mayhem (PG, 2023)** Animated fantasy with the voices of Nicolas Cantu and Jackie Chan **9.00 My Stepmother Is an Alien (15, 1988)** Sci-fi comedy with Dan Aykroyd and Kim Basinger **11.10** Last Night in Soho Interview Special. With director Edgar Wright **11.15 Under the Skin (15, 2013)** Sci-fi drama with Scarlett Johansson **1.25am-3.35 How to Talk to Girls at Parties (15, 2017)** Romantic comedy starring Elle Fanning

BBC3

7.00pm The Catch Up **7.05** Deadly 60. Part two of two. An encounter with a giant boa **7.30** Deadly 60. Tracking down the harpy eagle in Panama **8.00** Top Gear. The trio test high-performance hatchbacks, and Ross Noble is the celebrity driver **9.00** Survivor Australia. New series. The reality show returns to its original setting in Samoa **10.30** Survivor Australia. The Heroes live in solidarity, and the Villains struggle in the elements and are sent back to Tribal Council again **11.50** Confessions of a Steroid Gang. How a north Wales father and son built a drug empire (AD) **12.20am** Confessions of a Steroid Gang (AD) **1.20** Zara McDermott: Disordered Eating (AD) **2.20-3.55** Kidnapped by My Mum (AD, SL)

ITV2

6.00am Backyard Builds (SL) **6.30** Dress to Impress (AD, SL) **7.30** The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City **8.20** The Real Housewives of Orange County **9.20** The Only Way Is Essex **10.15** Dawson's Creek **11.10** Charmed **12.10pm** Deal or No Deal (AD) **1.10** Supermarket Sweep **2.10** The Floor USA (AD) **3.10** The Only Way Is Essex **4.10** Real Housewives of Salt Lake City **5.00** The Real Housewives of Orange County **6.00** Celebrity Catchphrase (AD) **7.00** The Floor USA (AD) **8.00** The 1% Club (AD) **9.00** Olivia Attwood: The Price of Perfection. New series (1/6) **10.00** Family Guy (AD) **11.35** American Dad! (AD) **12.35am** Bob's Burgers (AD) **1.30** Plebs (AD, SL) **1.55am-2.20** Deep Fake Neighbour Wars (SL)

ITV3

6.00am George and Mildred **7.05** Classic Emmerdale (AD) **8.10** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **9.10** Agatha Christie's Poirot (AD) **11.30** Heartbeat (AD) **1.35pm** Midsomer Murders (AD) **3.35** Classic Emmerdale (AD) **5.15** Classic Coronation Street (AD) **5.50** Heartbeat. Rural drama (AD) **8.00** Vera. The detective investigates when a body is found on the moors (1/4) (AD) **10.00** Grantchester. Will learns his father is in trouble (5/6) (AD) **11.00** Grantchester. A curious case unfolds concerning the murder of a Teddy Boy at a dance hall (6/6) (AD) **11.50** Trial & Retribution. Part two of two. Connor and her team struggle to find a lead in the case as the death toll increases (4/10) **1.25am-2.25** Wycliffe

ITV4

6.00am Magnum, PI (AD) **8.05** Dempsey and Makepeace (AD) **9.10** Boon **10.15** The Professionals (AD) **11.25** Robin of Sherwood **12.30pm** Magnum, PI (AD) **2.35** Dempsey and Makepeace (AD) **3.45** Boon **4.50** The Professionals (AD) **5.55** Minder. Terry shelters a fugitive (AD) **7.00** The Motorbike Show. Henry Cole embarks on his quest for land speed record glory **8.00** World Rally Championship Highlights. Action from the Rally Finland, based around Jyväskylä **9.00** Ice Road Truckers. Alex's trailer becomes detached in Manitoba **10.00** All Elite Wrestling: Collision. Hard-hitting wrestling action **12.00** Dark Side of the Ring. Revelations about the troubled mind of Chris Benoit **12.55am** Minder (AD, SL) **1.55am-2.45** BattleBots

U&Drama

6.00am Teleshopping **7.20** The Bill **8.15** Doctors **9.25** Classic Holby City **10.45** Casualty (AD) **11.45** The Bill **12.45pm** Classic EastEnders **2.00** Neighbours **3.00** Pie in the Sky **4.05** Lovejoy **5.20** As Time Goes By **6.00** Last of the Summer Wine **8.00** 'Allo 'Allo! The Resistance plans to hide money down Rene's trousers **8.30** 'Allo 'Allo! Rene gets rid of the money and the microfilm **9.05** 'Allo 'Allo! Alfonse is whisked to hospital with heart trouble **9.35** New Tricks. The squad reinvestigates the death of a timeshare magnate (5/8) (AD) **10.55** Luther. A gunman murders uniformed police officers (2/6) (AD) **12.10am** Lovejoy **1.20** Sister Boniface Mysteries (AD) **2.25** Hotel Portofino (SL) **3.25** Birds of a Feather **4.00am-6.00** Teleshopping

Variations

BBC1 N Ireland
10.40pm House of the Year. A new build, a bold terrace and a home designed around its view (r) 11.10 FILM: Robin Hood (2010) An archer returning from the crusades faces a plot by a traitorous knight to bring about a French conquest of England. Medieval adventure starring Russell Crowe and Cate Blanchett 1.20am-6.00 BBC News

BBC1 Scotland
7.00pm-7.30 River City. A guilt-ridden Conor tries to convince Nicole they should come clean. Dean stands up to Callum and Shak, and Gillian is left devastated after meeting with DCI Douglas (r) 12.50am Scotcast. Discussion on Scotland's biggest news stories (r) 1.20 Weather for the Week Ahead 1.25am-6.00 BBC News

STV
1.10am-3.00 Shop on TV
3.50am-6.00 Night Vision

BBC Scotland
7.00pm Reporting Scotland: News at Seven 7.30 My Kind of Town (r) 8.00 This Farming Life (r) 9.00 The Three Kings 10.45 Scotcast 11.15 Our Lives: Stone Strong (r) 11.45pm-12.00 Loop (r)

S4C
6.00am Cyw 10.00 Blociau Lliw (r) 10.05 Twm Twrch (r) 10.15 Help Llaw (r) 10.30 Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2026. The morning's events 12.00 News 12.05pm Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2026 2.00 News 2.05 Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2026 7.30 News; Weather 7.50 Eisteddfod Genedlaethol 2026 10.15 Y Babell Lên 2026 10.45-11.50pm Iaith ar Daith (r)

PBS America

8.00am America the Bountiful **8.35** Conquistadors: The Rise and Fall **9.40** Pirates: Behind the Legends **10.40** Iron Curtain: Living Under Soviet Occupation **11.55** Hitler's Gold **1.00pm** America the Bountiful **1.35** Conquistadors: The Rise and Fall **2.35** Hitler's Gold **3.35** Pirates: Behind the Legends **4.35** Iron Curtain: Living Under Soviet Occupation **5.50** Hitler's Gold **6.50** Conquistadors: The Rise and Fall. The Aztec Conquest **7.50** Pirates: Behind the Legends **8.50** Iron Curtain: Living Under Soviet Occupation. The occupation of Poland, Hungary, East Germany and Czechoslovakia (1/3) **10.00** Hitler's Gold **11.00** Pirates: Behind the Legends **12.00** Iron Curtain: Living Under Soviet Occupation **1.15am-2.00** America the Bountiful

Sky Atlantic

6.00am Fish Town (r) **8.00** Billions (r) (AD) **10.20** Task (r) (AD) **12.50pm** Homicide: Life on the Street (r) **3.00** Billions (r) (AD) **5.20** Heated Rivalry. Romantica drama with Hudson Williams (r) (AD) **7.30** True Detective: Night Country. The truth about what happened to Annie unfolds (6/6) (r) (AD) **9.00** Gomorrah: The Origins. Crime drama prequel tracking the criminal coming-of-age of the young Pietro Savastano in Naples in 1977 (3/6) **10.00** Gomorrah: The Origins. Crime drama prequel starring Luca Lubrano. In Italian (4/6) **11.00** Prisoner. Amber's plan is put in jeopardy as a game of cat and mouse unfolds (r) (AD) **12.00** True Detective: Night Country. Crime drama (r) (AD) **3.35am** Billions (r) (AD) **4.35** Sort Of (r) (AD) **5.05am-6.00** Urban Secrets (r)

Sky Docs

6.00am The 2000s (r) **7.00** Discovering: Gary Oldman (r) (AD) **8.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **9.00** 100 Foot Wave (r) (AD) **10.00** The Comedy Store (r) (AD) **11.05** UFO (r) (AD) **12.00** Albert Brooks: Defending My Life (r) (AD) **1.45pm** My Icon: John Amaechi (r) (AD) **2.00** Stasi FC (r) **3.50** My Icon: Michael Holding (r) (AD) **4.00** The Directors (r) (AD) **5.00** Discovering: Gary Oldman (r) (AD) **5.55** JFK: Destiny Betrayed (r) **7.00** Chernobyl: The Lost Tapes (r) (AD) **9.00** The Salisbury Poisonings: A Spy Next Door. *See picks of the day* **10.40 FILM: 2000 Meters to Andriivka (15, 2025)** A Ukrainian platoon attempts to liberate a village from Russian forces **12.50am** Amsterdam Narcos (r) **3.50** Edge of the Earth (r) (AD) **5.00-6.00** Discovering: Gary Oldman (r)

U&Yesterday

6.10am Abandoned Engineering (AD) **8.00** Bangers & Cash (AD) **10.00** Secret Nazi Bases **11.00** Auschwitz: The Nazis and the Final Solution **12.00** Antiques Roadshow **2.00pm** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics (AD) **3.00** Bangers & Cash (AD) **4.00** Secret Nazi Bases **5.00** Auschwitz: The Nazis and the Final Solution. Corruption within the SS **6.00** Antiques Roadshow **7.00** The Green Planet (AD) **8.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics. A 1972 VW Fastback (AD) **9.00** Bangers & Cash. An Opel Manta, and a Morris Oxford (AD) **10.00** Bangers & Cash: Restoring Classics. A Lotus Elan Series 1 (AD) **11.00** Bangers & Cash (AD) **12.00** Bangers & Cash (AD) **1.00am** Find It, Fix It, Flog It (AD) **2.00** Abandoned Engineering (AD) **3.00am-6.10** Teleshopping

MindGames

Tetonor Easy No 697

59	136	25	144
135	31	168	32
38	196	26	60
198	48	69	100

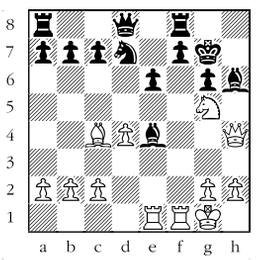
1	2	2	3	4	5		9	16		24		34		98

When complete, the strip below the grid can be split into eight pairs of numbers. Adding the numbers in a pair gives one of the 16 numbers in the grid. Multiplying them gives a different number in the grid. For example, a 4 and 6 in the strip could be paired to make 10 (4+6) and 24 (4x6) in the grid. Enter each sum below the corresponding number in the grid. The blanks in the strip must be deduced, bearing in mind the numbers are listed in ascending order.

The next Tetonor puzzle will appear on Thursday

For more puzzles, including Mini Sudoku, extra Codeword, Train Tracks and Futoshiki go to page 10

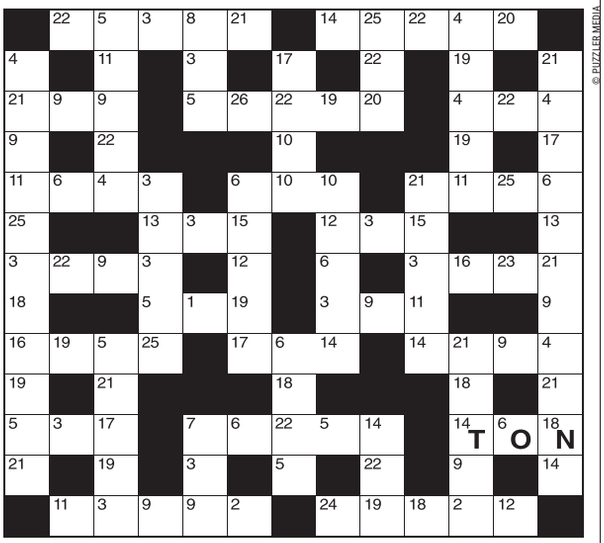
Winning Move



White to play.
This position is from Arslanov-Mattenberger, Titled Tuesday, chess.com 2026.

Although White has a promising attacking position it would appear that he is in trouble. Black has just captured on e4 and White has no good recapture due to the pin on the g5-knight. However, White was not thinking about regaining material but instead furthering the attack. Can you see how?

Codeword No 5910



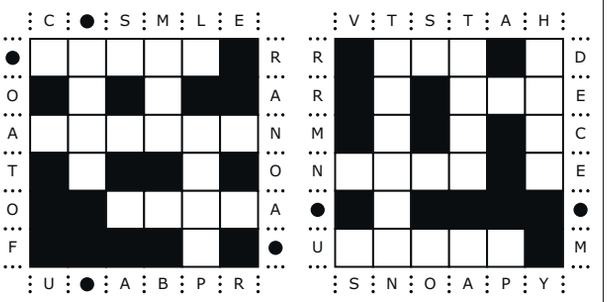
A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

1	2	3	4	5	6 O	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14 T	15	16	17	18 N	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26

Every letter in this crossword-style grid is represented by a number from 1 to 26. Each letter of the alphabet appears in the grid at least once. Use the letters already provided to work out the identity of further letters. Enter letters in the main grid and the smaller reference grid until all 26 letters of the alphabet have been accounted for. Proper nouns are excluded. *Yesterday's solution, right*

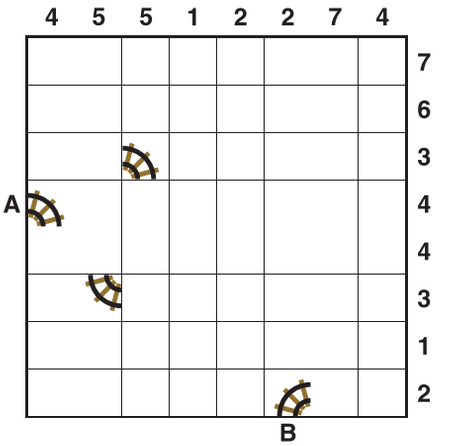
Clueless Stuck on Codeword? To receive 4 random clues call 0901 293 6262 or text TIMECODE to 64343. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. Texts cost £1 plus your standard network charge. For the full solution call 0905 757 0142. If you have an old newspaper and need clues from the past 7 days, call 0905 624 0024. Calls to 0905 cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm).

Lexica Easy No 9033 Hard No 9034



Slide the letters either horizontally or vertically back into the grid to produce a completed crossword. Letters are allowed to slide over other letters

Train Tracks No 2935



Lay tracks to enable the train to travel from village A to village B. The numbers indicate how many sections of track go in each row and column. There are only straight sections and curved sections. The track cannot cross itself.

Quintagram® No 2637

Solve all five **cryptic** clues using each letter underneath once only

1 Precisely place first third of umbrellas (5)

_ _ _ _ _

2 Very little in dry social media post (5)

_ _ _ _ _

3 Knock down tools (6)

_ _ _ _ _ _

4 Cast secure Shakespearean character (7)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _

5 Never-ending ants since works (9)

_ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

A	B	C	C	E	E	E	E
H	I	I	K	K	L	L	M
N	N	O	P	R	S	S	S
S	T	T	T	T	U	W	Y

Challenge your mind with these fiendish word and number puzzles

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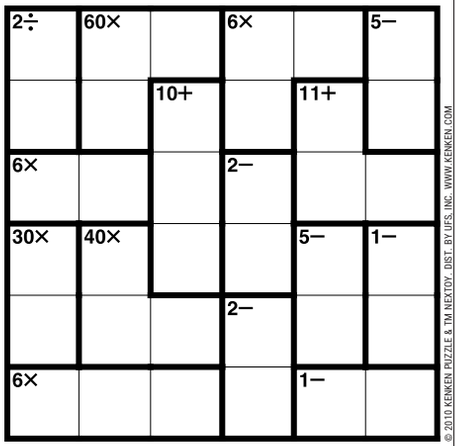
Try Wordhunt and Picle, our new online Quick Play puzzles at thetimes.com/puzzles and on the Live app

KenKen Medium No 6902



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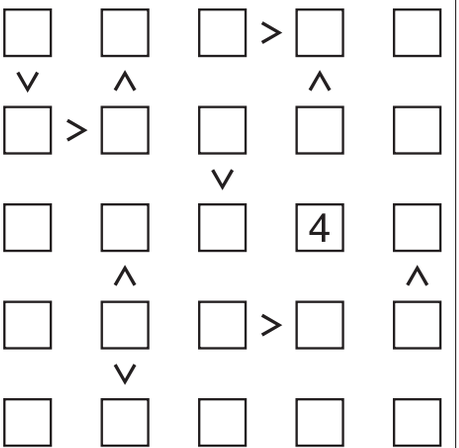
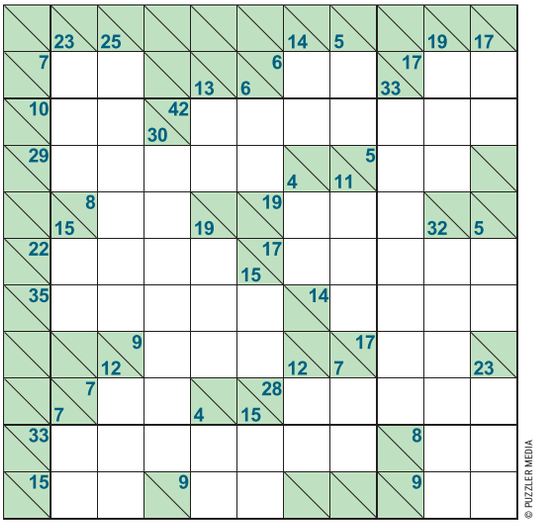
All the digits 1 to 6 must appear in every row and column. In each thick-line "block", the target number in the top left-hand corner is calculated from the digits in all the cells in the block, using the operation indicated by the symbol.

Futoshiki No 5450



Fill the blank squares so that every row and column contains each of the numbers 1 to 5 once only. The symbols between the squares indicate whether a number is larger (>) or smaller (<) than the number next to it.

Kakuro No 4409



Fill the grid using the numbers 1 to 9 only. The numbers in each horizontal or vertical run of white squares add up to the total in the triangle to its left or above it. The same number may occur more than once in a row or column, but not within the same run of white squares.

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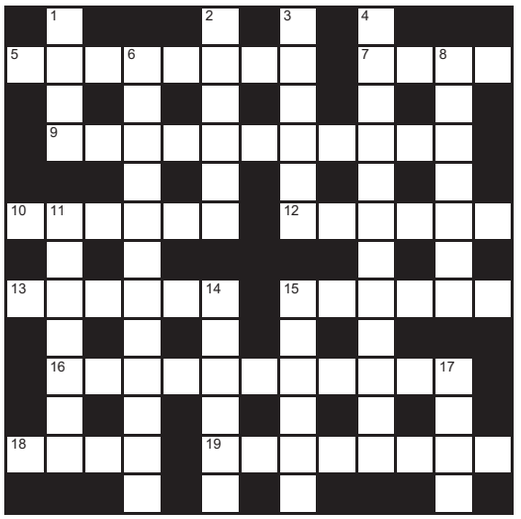
MindGames

times2 Crossword No 10,226



Across

5 Reporting and analysis of a topical event (8)
7 Vessel of the Red Sea and Indian Ocean (4)
9 Come a cropper (4,3,4)
10 Fairy king in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (6)
12 Miscellaneous facts (6)
13 (Of meat) less fatty (6)
15 Drink taken to complement the one before (6)
16 Render famous for ever (*S, not Z*) (11)
18 James ---, *Rebel Without a Cause* actor (4)
19 Cynical attempt to appear to offer equal opportunities (8)

Down

1 Grooming implement (4)
2 Scottish fabric design (6)
3 Of modern times (6)
4 Formal decision-making (12)
6 Act of installing on a seat of power (12)
8 In the open air (7)
11 Apiary (7)
14 Uncommonness (6)
15 Irritable, bad-tempered (6)
17 Abate, slacken (4)

Solution to Crossword 10,225

	B	A	S				A	C				
L	O	N	G	S	H	I	P		P	U	L	P
R	H		E		E		A		A			
R	E	V	A	M	P		R	E	C	A	P	
		S		H		S		H		T		
	A	N	T	W	E	R	P		E	A	R	P
	P			R		I				A		
C	O	O	P		D	U	C	H	A	M	P	
	S	R		S		A	C					
	T	R	O	O	P		C	A	T	N	A	P
	A		M		I		I		I		Q	
S	T	O	P		E	A	T	I	N	G	U	P
	E	T				Y		G		A		

Need help with today's puzzle? Call 0905 757 0143 to check the answers. Calls cost £1 per minute plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Bridge Andrew Robson

Topping the individual Butler rankings in the Open series at the recent 57th European Bridge National Teams Championships in Riga were the long-standing partnership of Simon de Wijs and Bauke Muller, representing the Netherlands. They play an artificial Strong Club method which they call Tarzan (Wijs-Muller ... Johnny ...).

Muller, uniquely in his country, has won the Bermuda Bowl twice (1993 and 2011), and was appointed a knighthood in the order of Orange-Nassau in 2012 for being the Netherland's most successful player. He was certainly the most successful leader on today's deal from Riga.

At 16 of the 30 tables, the contract was 3NT (15 of them declared by South). Only once was the contract defeated.

The key was West's opening lead. Although his partner had overcalled in spades (and he held a potentially useful ♠109x bolster), Muller took heed of his partner's pass of 3♠; de Wijs would have doubled 3♠ if he really wanted a spade lead. With South having shown a spade stopper, and dummy probably having seven running club tricks, Muller assessed, correctly, to look elsewhere.

He found the very well worked-out lead of the queen of diamonds, hoping for a layout similar to the actual one. The queen winning and declarer following with a revealing nine, Muller continued with the jack, pinning declarer's ten.

At trick three, West continued with a low diamond, a free-card suit preference signal for hearts over spades. After winning the ace, East duly switched to a low heart. Declarer had no ninth trick. He could only rise with the ace, cash out the clubs and fold his cards — "Nice defence boys," (I hope) he said.

The Netherlands finished fifth, one place higher than England, enough (being in the top eight) to secure a place in the Bermuda Bowl in Barbados next year.

andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk

Dealer: North, Vulnerability: Neither

Teams

	♠6 ♥92 ♦K72 ♣AKQJ973	
♠1095 ♥Q86 ♦QJ864 ♣102	N W E S	♠AQJ43 ♥K43 ♦A53 ♣65
	♠K872 ♥AJ1075 ♦109 ♣84	

S	W(Muller)	N	E(de Wijs)
		2♣(1)	2♠
Pass	Pass	3♠ (2)	Pass
3NT	End		

(1) Precision, showing six clubs and up to 15 points (or five clubs and a four-card major).
(2) "I have a solid suit. Bid 3NT with a spade stopper."

A natural auction would be

		1♣	1♠
Dbl(3)	2♠	3♠ (4)	Pass
3NT	End		

(3) Negative, promising hearts (South is not quite strong enough to bid (a forcing) 2♥ (even though it imparts his fifth card).
(4) Similar to (2) above.

Contract: 3NT, Opening Lead: ♦Q

Brain Trainer

EASY	19	x 3	+ 17	– 36	DOUBLE IT	+ 16	÷ 4	TRIPLE IT	– 27	÷ 6	ANSWER
MEDIUM	29	+ 38	DOUBLE IT	– 42	÷ 4	x 5	TRIPLE IT	+ 35	HALVE IT	÷ 10	ANSWER
HARDER	65	TIMES ITSELF	– 2319	HALVE IT	+ 17	HALVE IT	÷ 5	– 55	÷ 6	x 18	ANSWER

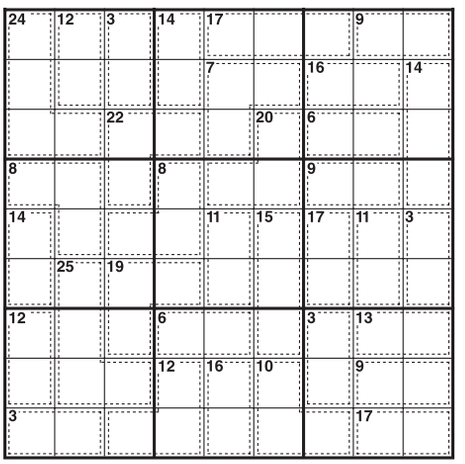
Polygon

From these letters, make words of **three** or more letters, always including the central letter. Answers must be in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, excluding capitalised words, plurals, conjugated verbs (past tense etc), adverbs ending in LY, comparatives and superlatives.
How you rate 15 words, average; 20, good; 26, very good; 32, excellent

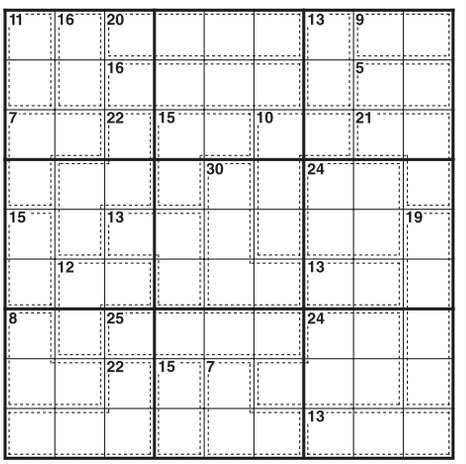
Yesterday's answers

ash, ashet, dah, dash, death, desh, edh, eth, hade, haste, hat, hate, head, **headset**, heat, heated, heed, hest, shad, shade, she, shea, shed, sheet, tash, the, thee, these

Killer Moderate No 10,858



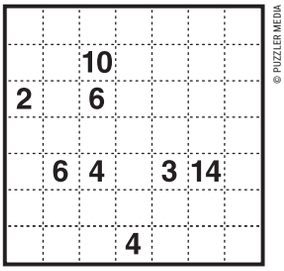
Killer Tough No 10,859



As with standard Sudoku, fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

Cluelines Stuck on Sudoku, Killer or KenKen? Call 0901 293 6263 before midnight to receive four clues for any of today's puzzles. Calls cost £1 plus your telephone company's network access charge. SP: Spoke, 0333 202 3390 (Mon-Fri 9am-5.30pm).

Cell Blocks No 5793



Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

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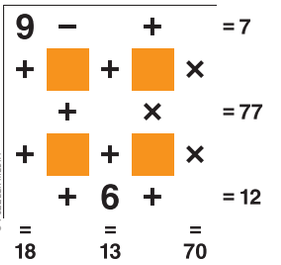
Set Square No 4412



Enter each of the numbers from 1 to 9 in the grid, so that the six sums work. We've placed two numbers to get you started. Each sum should be calculated left to right or top to bottom.

Please note, BODMAS does not apply

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Solutions

Quick Cryptic 3370

A	S	S	A	I	L			L	A	N	D	
C	T		N		C		E	B		R		
C	H	E	E	T	A	H		S	H	A	M	E
U		R		E		O		T		L		A
S	U	N	F	L	O	W	E	R		O	L	D
E			L			A		N				
D	R	O	P	I	N		I	N	S	E	C	T
		P		G				G				I
L	O	T		E	X	T	R	E	M	I	S	T
U		I		N		O		M		N		A
C	O	M	I	C		G	R	E	M	L	I	N
I		U		E		A		N		E		I
D	A	M	N			S	T	A	T	I	C	

Codeword 5909

T	E	F	Y		L	J						
D	O	W	N	S	I	Z	E		A	N	O	N
F	E	T		L	U	D						
Q	U	O	R	U	M		P	O	N	C	H	O
		G	E			C	P					
A	B	E	Y	A	N	T		S	H	R	U	G
E			T	S			R					
O	V	U	L	E		S	T	Y	L	I	S	H
E	U			O	O							
P	R	A	X	I	S		P	I	C	K	L	E
A	U		I	G	U	A						
A	G	A	R		T	R	A	N	S	F	I	X
E	Y		E	P	T		C					

Kakuro 4408

3	9		6	9		1	9	
1	2		1	6	8	3	2	4
	7	9		2	6		3	7
2	1	5		7	9		7	2	1
9	8		5	8		9	8	6	5
8	6	3	1		1	3		7	9
6	3	1		8	9		1	5	8
7	4			9	5		3	9	
	5	1	8	4	7	3		1	7
	2	9		8	1		8	9	

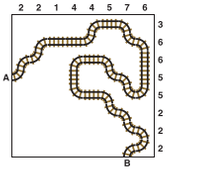
Sudoku 16,995

8	5	1	6	3	4	9	7	2
7	6	4	9	1	2	3	8	5
2	3	9	5	7	8	6	4	1
4	8	3	1	6	7	5	2	9
5	1	6	2	4	9	8	3	7
9	7	2	8	5	3	1	6	4
6	9	7	3	2	5	4	1	8
1	2	5	4	8	6	7	9	3
3	4	8	7	9	1	2	5	6

GK Crossword 349

T	O	R	U	S		B	L	A	C	K	P	O	O	L
A		O		A		O		R		E		T		I
B	O	B	B	L	E	H	A	T		T	R	O	O	N
I		I		E		R		H		C		L		D
T	A	N	T	R	A		C	U	S	H	I	O	N	S
H			N		M		R		U		G		A	
A	S	T	R	O	T	U	R	F		P	L	I	N	Y
T		H			S		E			S		A		
W	E	E	D	S		S	H	R	I	M	P	T	O	N
I		C		A		O		Y		A			D	
T	R	A	I	T	O	R	S		O	D	E	T	T	E
C		S		C		G		B		N		O		R
H	U	T	C	H		S	A	U	T	E	R	N	E	S
I		L		E		K		R		S		G		O
T	H	E	P	L	A	Y	E	R		S	P	A	W	N

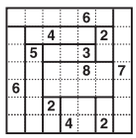
Train Tracks 2934



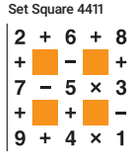
Sudoku 16,996

4	3	7	5	9	1	6	2	8
6	9	8	3	2	7	5	4	1
5	1	2	4	6	8	3	7	9
8	6	9	7	1	4	2	3	5
3	2	4	6	5	9	1	8	7
7	5	1	2	8	3	4	9	6
1	4	3	8	7	5	9	6	2
9	8	6	1	3	2	7	5	4
2	7	5	9	4	6	8	1	3

Cell Blocks 5792



Set Square 4411

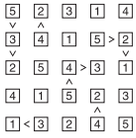


Lexica 9031

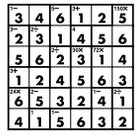
Sudoku 16,997

3	8	6	2	4	1	9	5	7
2	7	1	9	6	5	8	4	3
5	4	9	8	7	3	1	2	6
9	6	7	3	8	2	5	1	4
8	2	4	1	5	7	6	3	9
1	5	3	6	9	4	7	8	2
6	3	8	4	1	9	2	7	5
4	1	5	7	2	6	3	9	8
7	9	2	5	3	8	4	6	1

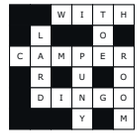
Futoshiki 5449



KenKen 6901



Lexica 9032



Killer 10,856

7	8	6	2	9	5	1	3	4
2	9	5	1	3	4	6	7	8
4	3	1	7	8	6	9	2	5
3	7	9	6	5	8	4	1	2
5	6	2	4	1	7	8	9	3
1	4	8	9	2	3	5	6	7
9	1	7	8	4	2	3	5	6
8	2	3	5	6	9	7	4	1
6	5	4	3	7	1	2	8	9

Killer 10,857

3	2	8	5	6	1	4	7	9
1	4	7	8	2	9	3	6	5
5	9	6	4	3	7	2	1	8
4	7	2	3	1	5	9	8	6
6	5	9	7	8	2	1	4	3
8	3	1	9	4	6	7	5	2
2	8	5	1	7	3	6	9	4
9	1	3	6	5	4	8	2	7
7	6	4	2	9	8	5	3	1

Today's solutions

Concise Quintagram
1 Blow
2 Clamp
3 Flurry
4 Slimmer
5 Pleasantry

Cryptic Quintagram
1 Plumb
2 Tweet
3 Strike
4 Shylock
5 Incessant

Sakuro 4811

Brain Trainer
Easy 7
Medium 19
Harder 126

Word watch

Avalement (b) A skiing technique (*Collins*) **Koftgar** (c) An artisan who inlays steel with gold (*Chambers*) **Gallinipper** (b) A large American mosquito (*OED*)

Chess — Winning Move

1 Rxf7+! removes vital protection from e6. After 1 ... Rxf7 2 Qxh6+ (an unnecessary gilding of the lily; 2 Nxe6+ and 3 Nxd8 was stronger) 2 ... Kxh6 3 Nxf7+ Kg7 4 Nxd8 Rxd8 5 Rxe4 and White soon won but 2 Nxe6+ would have forced resignation

Quiz

1 Legs **2** Beer, often lager **3** Dunkirk **4** AC/DC **5** Alexander the Great or Alexander III **6** Butterfly **7** Des Lynam **8** Dublin. He had just been appointed chief secretary for Ireland **9** Duodenum **10** Soup **11** Nick Davies **12** Gloster Gladiator **13** Termez or Termiz **14** Newmarket **15** Manx shearwater

THE TIMES

04.08.26

MindGames

For extra puzzles See page 10

Word watch
David Parfitt

Avalement
a Help, assistance
b A skiing technique
c Erosion by rivers or glaciers

Koftgar
a A dish of spiced meatballs
b A unisex robe-like garment
c An artisan who inlays steel with gold

Gallinipper
a A person who cannot sit still
b A large mosquito
c A 19th-century trading vessel

Answers on page 15

Sudoku
Mild No 16,998 | Difficult No 16,999 | Super fiendish No 17,000

						5		
			5	7	8	1	2	9
		1		9				
2			4		6		7	
3	7						8	5
	6		3		7			2
				3		9		
9	1	7	2	6	4			
		5						

			2		1			
	1	4		8		9	2	
5		8				6		1
			9		6			
		9				4		
		3	5		2	1		
		2				5		
			3		8			
3		1				8		4

				9		6		
	4		3					
	6	5		1		7	4	
4						9	2	6
1	5	2						4
	8	6		5		4	7	
					7		9	
	1		2					

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Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

The Times Daily Quiz
Olav Bjortomt

1 "Getaway sticks" is a slang term for which part of the body?

2 A lemon shandy combines lemonade and which alcoholic drink?

3 The May-June 1940 evacuation of which French port city was masterminded from beneath Dover Castle?

4 In Australia, which veteran rock band is known affectionately as "Acca Dacca"?

5 Iskanderkul, a turquoise lake in Tajikistan, is named after which king of Macedon?

6 *Mariposa* is the Spanish word for which winged insect?

ALAMY

7 In 1995, Mrs Merton called which *Match of the Day* host "the Tom Cruise for menopausal women"?

8 In 1882, Lord Frederick Cavendish was assassinated in Phoenix Park hours after his arrival in which city?

9 Which section of the small intestine derives its name from a Latin phrase for 12 finger-widths (in length)?

10 Terence Frisby wrote the 1966 comedy play *There's a Girl in My ...* what?

11 Which investigative journalist was played by David Tennant in the 2025 ITV drama *The Hack*?

12 Entering service in 1937, which Gloster aircraft was the RAF's last biplane fighter?

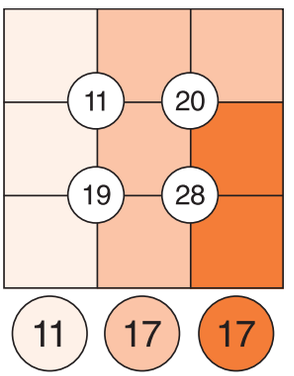
13 Capital of the Surkhandarya region, what is Uzbekistan's southernmost city?

14 Owned by Sheikh Mohammed, Dalham Hall Stud lies on the outskirts of which town?

15 Which enigmatic bird, aka *Puffinus puffinus*, is pictured?

Answers on page 15

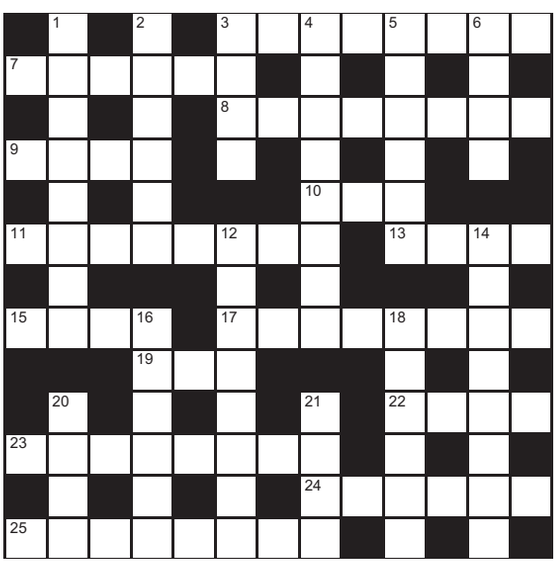
Sakuro
No 4811



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each colour total is correct

For interactive puzzles visit thetimes.com

The Times Quick Cryptic
No 3371 by Wurm



Across
3 Wild sea god in coastal location (3,5)
7 Deplore weak book collection (6)
8 Word of twenty-six letters? (8)
9 Smashed up (4)
10 Bluejay regularly in meadow (3)
11 Dip Roger prepared in time (8)
13 Student group long to finish early (4)
15 Live with a rook: ferocious creature (4)
17 Bachelor back to welcome the rest (8)
19 Drink one Guinness shortly (3)
22 Terror initially recognised in club (4)
23 Geniality from one in good French house (8)
24 Tentacle finally flung out in swamp (6)
25 Chair Charlie occupies on ship (8)

Down
1 Singer in Italian port to north-east (8)
2 British Nehru cast in film (3-3)
3 Support what Remainer would do? (4)
4 Dancing seen to involve whitish people (8)
5 Kind of bishop to leave bin out (2,1,3)
6 Dope touring large Scottish valley (4)
12 Bad omen misplaced about river dog (8)
14 American chaps fit and willing (8)
16 Girl with pain in both sides (6)
18 Also about to seize island (6)
20 Wrapped up ready to eat (4)
21 Noble to go with king (4)

Yesterday's solution on page 15

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